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# The Joy of Service:

Life Stories of Racial and  
Ethnic Minority  
Deaconesses and Home Missionaries

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*History Task Force  
Committee on Deaconess Service  
National Program Division  
General Board of Global Ministries  
The United Methodist Church*

*With Professional Assistance by  
Beatrice Fernandez and Brenda Webber*

## Foreword

This booklet is one of the fruits of a Dialogue Group that met in November of 1986. The group was composed of racial and ethnic minority deaconesses and lay home missionaries, active and retired, of The United Methodist Church. It was sponsored by the Committee on Deaconess and Home Missionary Service of the National Program Division of the General Board of Global Ministries. In addition to reunion and fellowship, one objective of the gathering was to engage in discussion regarding recruitment among racial and ethnic minority persons.

Fifteen deaconesses and home missionaries were in attendance, plus three staff members, and two directors of the National Program Division. They met at Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center near Atlanta, Georgia.

High on the list of priority concerns during the dialogue was the importance of making the entire community of faith more aware of the work of racial and ethnic minority deaconesses and home missionaries. Ethnic minorities should be perceived as "providers" as well as "receivers" of ministries.

During the 1989-1992 quadrennium, the Committee on Deaconess Service named a History Task Force to follow up on the recommendations resulting from the dialogue. It decided that the best way to tell the story of racial and ethnic minority deaconesses and home missionaries would be through their individual life histories. Letters were sent to all active and retired personnel asking them for their life stories. A form was included asking deaconesses and home missionaries to respond to specific questions:

- What is your cultural background?
- What influenced you to become a deaconess or home missionary?
- How did you prepare yourself for service?
- Where did you serve and in what capacity?
- What were some of the difficult situations you confronted, some highlights of your ministry, and some specific social changes you dealt with in your work environment?

The responses have provided the basis for this booklet.

As the task was begun, it was not known if the project could move beyond just a collection of stories about deaconesses and home missionaries for the files, but the richness of their experiences and the historical significance of their work mandated publication for a wider audience.

These biographies are presented with great appreciation for the persons themselves and for their dedication and selfless giving on behalf of the Christ who called them into service.

*Betty J. Letzig*

*Executive Secretary*

*Deaconess Program Office and Mission Personnel Services*

*September 1992*

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SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
California

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## Introduction

It is with a deep sense of humility that the History Task Force of the Committee on Deaconess Service presents these brief life stories of the racial and ethnic minority deaconesses and home missionaries, active and retired, of The United Methodist Church. None of their stories is complete; yet, as they tell their own stories, we are inspired and motivated. These servants have been called by God, and in their responses have been empowered to become a part of God's plan for humanity.

There are many common themes in their stories. As God's plan unfolded for their lives, their supportive communities were always there: families, pastors, cousins, friends, and frequently other deaconesses or home missionaries. The presence of this "great cloud of witnesses" gave them the perseverance needed to run their races. The support for each one of them produced an overwhelming commitment to the task before them. As they accepted their mission and ministry, serious preparation was a part of their plan. In the early stages of their careers, they learned the true meaning of JOY—Jesus, Others, Yourself. Their priorities were immediately set in place.

Their stories are dramatic evidence of the need for more disciples dedicated to mission and ministry in our churches and communities. They also illustrate the importance of giving greater exposure, especially in their own annual conferences, to the work that racial and ethnic minority deaconesses and home missionaries did and are doing. It is this need that brought forth this booklet. They truly have a great story to tell.

*Carolyn C. Dorman, Chairperson  
History Task Force  
Committee on Deaconess Service*



## **Olive Webster Alston**

*Deaconess*

Born September 28, 1910, in Guilford County, North Carolina

Commissioned January 17, 1963      Retired October 1, 1975

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### **Record of Service**

1962-65	Rural Worker, Welch, West Virginia
1965-67	Rural Worker, Wytheville Area, Wytheville, West Virginia
1967-73	Rural Worker, Holston Valley, Pulaski, Virginia
1973-1975	Rural Worker, Catawba Area, Hickory, North Carolina

My father was a Methodist pastor. Ever since I was a little girl I have enjoyed working with other people, especially children. After graduation from Winston-Salem Teacher's College, I taught first grade in the county schools of North Carolina, among rural labor groups and sharecropper farmers. No matter how hard I worked with the children who came to school the first of the year, their parents would move in January and there would always be a new group to become acquainted and work with. At times this was very discouraging.

Working in the church school made me aware that I could do full-time Christian work. My pastor suggested that I go to Gammon Theological Seminary to study. The more I studied there, the more interested and enthusiastic I became about the work and its possibilities.

Nola Smee and Connie Russell, both deaconesses, talked with me about becoming a deaconess. Even though I was trained and qualified to serve as a pastor, I preferred to be a deaconess. As a pastor, I would have had to be more involved in the areas of finance, buildings, etc., and that was not what I wanted. I wanted to work with people and be close to them.

I began my church work as a summer worker for the Woman's Division of Christian Service, and then became a full-time rural worker in Spring City, which was in the East Tennessee Conference of the Central Jurisdiction. Being a rural worker involved doing whatever would help a church or a community grow and develop its own leadership from within. I directed day camps, vacation Bible schools, and mission studies, and I worked with women's and children's groups.

In 1962 I moved to the coal-mining community of Welch, West Virginia, where I did similar work. Then, in preparation for the merger of the Central Jurisdiction with the Southeastern and Northeastern Jurisdictions, I moved to Wytheville, West Virginia, in 1964. In all of these places, part of my job was to get persons in remote areas to conference and district meetings.

In 1967 I became part of the Holston Valley Rural Work in Pulaski, Virginia, moving from there to the Catawba Area Rural Work in Hickory, North Carolina, where I retired on August 31, 1975.



After retirement I continued to play the piano regularly for three churches, was active in three United Methodist Women's groups, took lessons in crocheting, knitting, organ, and guitar, was part of a senior citizens' group, and volunteered at a local hospital. I also often spoke or preached at Sunday worship services.

*\*Editor's Note:* For health reasons, Olive Alston was unable to respond personally to the questionnaire. Her story was composed from material in her file.



## **Estefania Pascual Ancheta**

*Deaconess*

Born December 17, 1914

Commissioned March 8, 1949 (Northern Philippines Central Conference)

Transferred to U.S. Church in 1969 Retired June, 1976

### **Record of Service**

1949-52	Kindergarten Deaconess, Dugo, Camalanuigan Cagayan, Philippines
1952-55	Kindergarten Deaconess, Gattaran, Cagayan, Philippines
1955-61	District Deaconess, North Isabela-Kalinga District, South Cagayan, Philippines
1961-62	Study Leave
1962-64	Kindergarten Deaconess, M'lang, Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines
1964-65	Pastor, Columbio, Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines
1965-68	Leave of Absence
1968-75	Frances DePauw International House, Hollywood, California
1975-76	Leave of Absence

My pastors and my cousin were the people who encouraged me to take up a deaconess course and also to become a kindergarten teacher. My cousin was a deaconess herself. She was also a public school teacher and the first person in our family to become a Methodist. She spent time with me and talked with my parents about my becoming a church worker. In addition, I found reading the Bible and singing the hymns of the church to be valuable in my Christian vocation.

My first position was as a public school teacher in my hometown of Gattaran, Cagayan, in the Philippines. But after World War II, I resigned from teaching and went to Harris Memorial College, in Manila, to prepare for the deaconess/kindergarten course. When I graduated I was appointed to a local church as a deaconess and assigned to open a kindergarten school. I had been commissioned as a deaconess on March 8, 1949.

As a deaconess and a kindergarten teacher, I was assigned to Dugo Methodist Church

in the Philippines. My second appointment was back in my hometown. After that I was appointed district deaconess of Cagayan-Apayao District and served in that capacity for six years.

As a district worker, I had a lot of problems with the deaconesses in the district. But the problems were solved with God's help as I entrusted my work to Him. When I left the district assignment, the other deaconesses were sorry to see me go.

My next assignment was in Mindanao Annual Conference. It was in 1966 that I came to the United States. The Woman's Division had appointed me to Frances DePauw International House on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, California. I remained at DePauw until I retired.

My work as a counselor at DePauw was challenging, because I dealt with many different races of people. In the United States, I discovered prejudice against those of us who belong to ethnic minority groups. In the Philippines, we were all Filipinos and I could easily adjust to the social status of the people with whom I worked. But my work in the United States was very different because of the many races I had to deal with. I retired in June of 1976.

Now that I'm retired, I work as a volunteer at First United Methodist Church in Los Angeles. I've noticed that we Filipino American members of the church are not given the opportunity to worship in our mother tongue. We've asked the bishop of our conference to appoint a Filipino pastor so that our dream of worshipping God in our own language will be granted. In this way, as an ethnic minority group, we will be able to achieve the mandate of the General Conference to witness and be in mission in our world and in the local church where we belong.



### **Carolyn Mary Anderson**

*Deaconess*

Born September 1, 1946, in Washington, D.C.

Commissioned October 28, 1979

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#### **Record of Service**

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|---------|---|
| 1979-81 | Director of Christian Education, Four Black Churches, Norwalk District, East Ohio Conference, Norwalk, Ohio |
| 1981-85 | Associate Director, East Ohio Conference Council on Ministries, North Canton, Ohio                          |
| 1985-91 | Executive Director, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Dayton, Ohio                                       |
| 1991-   | Coordinator, Post-Secondary Education Demonstration Lab, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio      |

The two things that probably influenced me most to become a deaconess were the inspiring deaconesses from other denominations whom I met and my own search for ways to be of service. I wasn't looking for some specific job like becoming a Christian educator or minister. Instead I wanted to be fully open to whatever way God would call me to service.

I tend to look upon being a deaconess not as a profession but rather as an area of ministry and vocation. I have a master's degree in religious education from Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee. I also attended Federal City College in Washington, D.C. Outside of formal education, I think my personal preparation to become a deaconess has been a long-standing involvement and connection with a local church and its involvement with and connection to the community.

As a deaconess, I served as program developer for four black churches in East Ohio's Norwalk District from 1979 to 1981. In Norwalk, there was a time lag between when I was appointed and when I actually arrived to begin work. Within that time, all four of the pastors who were involved in my hiring as program developer were reassigned to other churches. So when I arrived, there were four new pastors in place who knew nothing about why I was hired and what I was supposed to do.

The new pastors were all just out of seminary and had no experience in working with a layperson. Another problem—I discovered later—was that the people had agreed to having me at their churches only because it was what their previous pastors had wanted. The members did not understand the concept of a program developer or what that person was supposed to do. They were under the impression that I was to do the programming for them. They did not understand why I didn't teach Sunday school or lead the youth groups as opposed to developing leadership among them to do the jobs themselves.

But it was a delight to see laypeople learn to get excited about serving God's church and come to the realization that they have something to offer the church. It was exciting to see a summer day camp emerge and grow into a meaningful program. To see a youth group develop and young people learn to feel good about themselves. To see some of those young people now, grown up and active as leaders in youth groups themselves.

When I left that position, I joined the East Ohio Conference staff, with responsibility for developing and strengthening 23 racial and ethnic minority churches. I served there as associate director of the Conference Council on Ministries from 1981 to 1985. I think the biggest problem I ran into on the Conference Council staff was that it took a long time for the conference leaders to accept the fact that I knew more about what was going on in the racial and ethnic minority churches than they did. The reason I knew more was that I was a layperson and the people felt free to talk to me. People would call me and I would visit the churches.

Also, the council director initially thought that because I was a woman, I was not going to be accepted by the black pastors. She did not realize that being a layperson, a woman, and older was the best combination. I was no competition to the pastors.

Sometimes little brush fires would occur. I have told white persons that it is more racist to have low expectations of black churches than to exhibit overt acts of racism. An example is telling black churches that they do not have to pay apportionments because they are "poor, little churches." I've often asked, "Who are you to tell these people they are not as blessed by God to meet their responsibilities?"

Nevertheless, it has been a highlight to have been part of a conference Convocation of Black Worship and Preaching, to really bring the best of black worship, music, and preaching out in such a way that people can see its strengths. It was uplifting to see the black churches bring a witness to the conference that is deeply rooted in the Holy Spirit.

My next position was as executive director of the National Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) from 1985 to 1991. At BMCR there was enormous responsibility in comparison with the resources and help available. The person in charge had to raise all the funds, be one of the key players for the General Conference, and help organize as well as strengthen each local and jurisdictional caucus. One person had to do this with little or no financial or human support.

One of the highlights of working for BMCR was a Black Church Growth Consultation.

It offered disciplined worship experiences, a sound theology, and practical models for growth in both urban and rural settings.

The job I have now has been just about all highlights. I'm serving as coordinator of the Post-Secondary Education Demonstration Lab at Youngstown (Ohio) State University's Office of Student Services. It's a pre-college intervention program that works with both economically disadvantaged and minority students and helps direct them and prepare them for a college career. We've reached almost 3,000 youths, some multiple contacts, and all can be documented. That is evidence of the grace of God. We are tracking these students and doing follow-up work with them, guiding them in the direction of college.

Some of the social changes I've noticed have concerned the issues of inclusive language, the role of women in the church and society, and the growing epidemic of drugs and its effect on young people in ways I don't think anyone was prepared for. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of grandparents raising their teenaged grandchildren by default, in many cases because of parental drug use. Sometimes miscommunications between these two generations can result in conflict and misunderstandings.

I would say that being a deaconess has given me the opportunity to be a part of a large sisterhood. I have several deaconess friends in Australia, the Philippines, and Malaysia with whom I keep in contact. I have been able to visit many places, meet other deaconesses, and hear stories of how they have lived out their faith.

Also, I love knowing that I have a connection with an historic tradition, knowing that I am part of a group of women who have committed themselves to Christ.



### **Josephine Beckwith**

*Home Missionary*

Born April 22, 1908, in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commissioned December 6, 1942      Retired Retired June 1, 1973

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#### **Record of Service**

1940-42	Mother's Memorial Center/Day Nursery, Cincinnati, Ohio
1942-46	Director, Mt. Zion Church (Community Center), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1946-47	Sabbatical, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1947-52	Director, Mt. Zion Community Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1952-54	Executive Director, Bethlehem Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
1954-56	Program Director, Girls' Department, South Side Settlement, Columbus, Ohio
1956-58	Sabbatical, University of Kansas School of Social Welfare
1958-60	Director, Bethlehem Center, Savannah, Georgia
1960-71	Executive Director, Bethlehem Center, Ft. Worth, Texas
1971-73	Executive Director, United Community Centers, Ft. Worth, Texas

My experiences in my community, my school, and the YWCA influenced my decision to become a home missionary. I remember organizing a group of neighborhood teenaged boys in order to meet the needs of one boy from a family of seven whose parents suffered from both mental and physical disabilities. Then my work with the youth organization in my local church provided opportunities for me to attend national youth convocations as well as other conferences with an educational and inspirational emphasis. All of these experiences had an impact on my decision.

Although I had a degree in education from Kansas State Teacher's College, I felt led to dedicate myself to working with people, so I sought additional training in order to achieve that goal. My youth group counselor suggested I go to National College, actually the National Training School in Kansas City, Missouri. But the year was 1939. I had to go through litigation that involved the Woman's Home Missionary Society, the college's faculty, and the State of Missouri before I would be allowed to enroll as a full-time student. While I was finally admitted, the State of Missouri would not permit me to live in college housing. That was only one of the difficult situations I've had to deal with in life.

Years after I graduated from National College, I learned that the State of Missouri had added another stipulation to my acceptance: I could not be buried in the cemetery across the street from the school. I smiled at this new revelation because in 1940 I had become the first black student to graduate from any college in Missouri.

I served (1940-1942) at Mother's Memorial Center Day Nursery in Cincinnati, Ohio, as part of the day care and group work staff. I organized and directed Mt. Zion Methodist Church Community Center, sponsored by the Philadelphia WSCS Conference. From 1946 to 1947 I took a year's sabbatical to attend school and then returned to the Mt. Zion Center.

I was executive director of the Bethlehem Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and later program director of South Side Settlement House in Columbus, Ohio. In 1956-57 I took another sabbatical leave to attend Scarritt College.

Seeking admission as a full-time graduate student was difficult, again because of racial restrictions at the state level. I had applied for admission to Scarritt College, in Nashville, Tennessee, but I was not admitted. Tennessee state law did not permit the admission of American Negroes. In the early 1950s, the Scarritt College Board of Trustees voted to admit Negroes at the graduate level. It was not until the Supreme Court decision of 1954 that the Tennessee Law relating to undergraduate status was changed.

I enrolled at Scarritt in the fall of 1956 and I also took classes in social work at the University of Tennessee School of Social Work. Unfortunately, because my mother was ill, I was there for only part of a term.

In Columbus, Ohio, I was surprised to encounter hostilities between white people who lived in the area and white people from West Virginia. Although the same kind of prejudice was not directed at Italians, Hungarians, or other ethnic groups, a different level of services was provided for whites from West Virginia. Activities at our agency were segregated, with blacks and whites attending sessions on different days. With the approval of the staff, I was able to change this with only a few minor incidents.

There were other difficult situations. Once I was invited to speak at a Methodist Church and then was uninvited. I was told some members were against having an African American speak at their church and they needed to pray about it. However, after much prayer, I was reinvited and I accepted.

I have encountered difficult situations even at church celebrations. A woman being honored for her 50 years of work in mission in her local church refused to stand in line at her reception because a black staffperson was also in the line.

A real challenge for me was establishing the Bethlehem Center in a predominantly white neighborhood in Savannah, Georgia, in 1958. I served as the executive director. A white

member of my staff was harassed because she worked for me, a black executive director. One influential resident used his relationship with real estate and building inspectors, along with other methods, to prohibit our use of the property. We won the respect of former enemies after the program was established and earned a positive image.

In Fort Worth, Texas, I shared in the merger of three different community centers under one board of directors. The three became United Community Centers.

I've also supervised volunteers and students in teacher training, sociology, and social work at the undergraduate level. I did this in cooperation with the universities in the areas where I served. Some students were denied placement because I was the head of the agency.

A highlight of my ministry has been community involvement, especially in intercultural relations. Sometimes I served as the innovator, the "pusher" who got things started. My relationship with the universities made it possible for me to work with students from various cultural and religious backgrounds, many of whom told me later that their experiences with me had not only given them college credit but had also changed their attitudes in very positive ways.

At the various community centers where I've served, we've had to overcome the opposition of influential city residents who sought to thwart our efforts by prohibiting use of center property. We've had to fight to gain and to maintain a positive image for the centers, and in several cases, win the respect of former enemies. In one instance, a former opponent became treasurer of the center's board of directors and a loyal supporter of the agency.

From the time I was commissioned as a home missionary on December 6, 1942, to the time I retired on June 1, 1973, every year of service was a joy—in spite of the difficulties—because God was always there to give me direction.

I've earned a master's degree in education from Temple University in Philadelphia and a master's degree in social work from the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare. I've also received several certificates of recognition from church and community groups, in addition to other awards. And finally, I was named to *Who's Who of American Women* in 1972.



## **Daisy Marie Cabean**

*Deaconess*

Born November 27, 1908, in Lockesburg, Arkansas

Commissioned January 22, 1965

Retired June 1, 1973

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### **Record of Service**

1965-73

Director, Neighborhood House Day Care Center, Wilmington, Delaware

When I was a young girl, my greatest desire was to become a missionary and serve in a foreign country. The dream always stayed in the back of my mind.

But, when I was ready for college, my parents were unable to send me because we had a large family. So I worked my way through. It took longer to finish than most students. During that time, I met some deaconesses and learned about mission opportunities at home.

I attended Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas, during the summers for four years. I spent one year taking extra courses and doing volunteer work at Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. I also did field work for the Methodist Board of Education. I earned my bachelor's degree in religious education from Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, June 11, 1962. I reached my next goal on January 22, 1965, when I was commissioned as a deaconess.

Before that, I had served at the Bethlehem Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, as Acting Director for a short period and then as a group worker. In Wilmington, Delaware, I was Director of Day Care at Neighborhood House. I retired from deaconess service on June 1, 1973.

During my years of work, I have encountered neighbors who had little pride in themselves or in their community, making intervention difficult for community center workers. Halfway houses in some neighborhoods made it unsafe to sponsor night activities in our neighborhoods. Still, we did our work at the centers and in the neighborhoods in the name of the Lord.

One of my most precious memories is of a four-year-old boy and his parents. The boy had problems and his parents had given up on him. When they took him to a doctor, the doctor suggested that the boy be put into a good day care program and recommended ours. We worked with that little boy and gave him all the love and concern that we could give. Before he finally left our center, he was observed to be above average. His parents came and thanked us for a "new son."

I've given 20 years of service, eight of them as a deaconess. Those years were spent in two community centers. I am grateful to God for having given me an opportunity to work with so many people. I feel that our work is an arm of the church, reaching out to many who would otherwise never be reached. My work over these years has been very rewarding.





## **Celeste Paraso Cerezo**

*Deaconess*

Born January 27, 1917

Commissioned March 9, 1940 (Central Philippines Conference)

Transferred to U.S. Church June 1967

Retired July 1, 1973

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### **Record of Service**

1940-61	Service in the Philippines Harris Memorial College Kindergarten Teacher, Kamuning United Methodist Church Kindergarten Teacher/Janitor, Orani Bataan Methodist Church
1961-68	Christian Education Coordinator, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Honolulu, Hawaii
1968-72	Parish Worker, Susannah Wesley Community Center, Waialua, Hawaii

A deaconess by the name of Paz Pineda-Dungca saw me in church every Sunday and asked me to help her with her class as an assistant. Then she asked me to help her in her daily kindergarten school; this was the year my father lost his job. Ms. Pineda-Dungca took me to Harris Memorial College in Manila, Philippines, and enrolled me in the kindergarten/deaconess course. She even paid my tuition fees.

It took me three years to finish my kindergarten course at Harris. And when I did, the school kept me on after graduation to take over the class of Eleanor Padilla, who was getting married. I taught in the morning and took deaconess classes in the afternoon. I finished my deaconess course after the war, in 1945.

I continued in school for more training. I took evening classes and earned my teaching certificate in education and my Bachelor of Science degree in education at National Teacher's College and the University of the East. I was a Crusade Scholar in 1954 and received my master's degree in elementary education from National College of Education in Evanston, Illinois.

My record of service includes working at Harris Memorial College and at the Methodist Social Center (originally named P. Paredes) in 1949. I was a deaconess without pay in Gerona, Tarlac, when I opened a kindergarten class with about 20 children. I spent two years at the Kamuning Methodist Center as a deaconess/kindergarten teacher. At Orani, Bataan Methodist Center, I was the pastor, deaconess, kindergarten teacher, and janitor. My responsibilities were broad and varied because there was no pastor to assist me in the church's work.

Sometimes my experiences were difficult ones. I often stayed at P. Paredes to help the missionaries shop for the other missions. In the market, Dr. Bliss Billings would buy fruits and vegetables, plus fish and chicken or pork, and carry them in two baskets hanging from his



shoulders. When the missionaries were imprisoned at Santo Tomas University, I boiled eggs and sweet potatoes and fried chicken. I'd wrap all of this up in clean paper, then put newspaper around it and toss it over the tall bamboo fence into the Santo Tomas grounds. In Bataan I wore a great many hats, again because I had no minister with me.

Looking back, one of the major accomplishments of my service was the recognition that four of the Philippine bishops were once my Sunday school pupils: Jose C. Gamboa, Jr., Paul L. A. Granadosin, Laverne Mercado, and Emerito P. Nacpil.

At our evacuation center, I turned an old hut into a chapel where people came to worship together—Catholics and Protestants alike. This was in the 1940s during World War II.

I taught kids to write their names in sand. And I taught them their ABCs and numbers using tree bark as paper and charcoal as pencils.

I also cured returning soldiers who were dying of dysentery. Many had escaped the death march from Bataan to Tarlac. They were bloated and agonizing with swollen feet. The Holy Spirit taught me what to do in these situations because I did not know what to do by myself. I'd gather all the people present and have them kneel around the patient and pray. The Holy Spirit dictated to me what to do next and I did it.

I designated who was to do what job: i.e., his father got bark from the plum tree; his mother dressed and cooked the chickens for broth; his grandmother and sister changed the soldiers' bedding and their clothes; his uncle started the fire; his brother gathered young leaves of guavas for them to chew; and his father and brother aided the men in flushing out their systems. Our efforts saved the lives of three men.

My father asked me where I learned all of this. He said my face shone like an angel's while I was in command of the situation. I told him, "Bless the Lord, O my soul! The Lord hears His children's cry."

He heard my cry many times. We had to hide from Japanese soldiers. The Lord saved me and my brother from guerilla fighters who wanted to kill us because they thought we were rich. In fact, we were eating only once a day! We were surviving on what the people of the barrio gave us.

I've seen many social changes during my years as deaconess. When I was at P. Paredes Methodist Social Center as program director, I helped 20 students get jobs. They worked as janitors, playground helpers, cooks, marketers, assistant librarians, leaders of children and youth, carpenters, gardeners, and handicraft and sewing teachers. I met with five groups of gangsters who operated around the Methodist Center. I gave them jobs shining shoes and I began a crafts contest, judging their creations made from coconut and bamboo.

From 1962 to 1970 I worked as a parish worker in Waialua, Hawaii, with special responsibility for language work, particularly among Filipinos. However, I also served Mexicans, Portuguese, and Chinese immigrants.

From 1970 to 1972 I was on the staff of both Aldersgate United Methodist Church and Susannah Wesley Community Center in Honolulu. My deaconess relationship was transferred from the Philippines to The United Methodist Church in the United States in 1967, with retroactive credit for my years of service since 1962.

After I retired, my husband agreed to build, as an annex to our home, a chapel that would seat 80 people so that newly arriving Filipino immigrants would have a place to worship in their own language on Sunday mornings. We have 20 to 25 for afternoon worship as well as Friday evening youth fellowship and Saturday choir practice. A Bible study group, led by our local United Methodist pastor, meets in my home weekly, and officers of the Aldersgate Methodist Church use our chapel once a year for a spiritual retreat.



## **Flora Clipper**

*Deaconess*

Born December 13, 1922, in Jeffersonville, Indiana  
Commissioned June 14, 1950      Retired June 1, 1988

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### **Record of Service**

1950-51	Kindergarten Teacher, Methodist Mission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
1951-55	William Howard Day Project, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
1955-65	Program Director, Marcy Center, Chicago, Illinois
1965-66	Sabbatical
1966-68	Day Care Director, Wesley Community Center, Atlanta Georgia
1968-74	Day Care Director, Bethlehem Center, Charlotte, North Carolina
1974-80	Executive Director, Bethlehem Center, Jackson, Mississippi
1980-88	Day Care Director, Wesley Community House, Louisville, Kentucky

While a student at National College in Kansas City, Missouri, I was greatly influenced and impressed by the inner serenity, devotion, and work of the deaconesses on the faculty there. When I realized that there was an opportunity in the church for me to provide the kind of service I was capable of providing and to do it as a deaconess, I was ready to give it a try!

I graduated from National College in 1949 with an A.B. degree, majoring in early childhood education. I earned my master's in 1965 from George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1950, between college and graduate school, I was commissioned as a deaconess.

I've spent 39 years involved in community center work. I started at the Methodist Mission in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, as a kindergarten teacher from 1949 to 1955. My next position was at Marcy Center in Chicago, Illinois, as a nursery school teacher and then program worker. I moved on to Wesley House in Atlanta, Georgia, and Bethlehem Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, where I served as Day Care Director. In Jackson, Mississippi, I was Executive Director of the Bethlehem Center. Finally, I served at Wesley House in Louisville, Kentucky, as Day Care Director.

During those times, some of the most difficult situations I faced had to do with balancing small budgets while trying to meet great needs in the communities. It was difficult, serving the needs of people with limited agency budgets. This often meant having too few staff members or inadequately trained staff or limited equipment.

In spite of the lack of funds, there were many highlights in my ministry. The Christmas spirit at most community centers was excellent—exciting really—especially at Marcy Center, where we had huge Christmas programs and always enough gifts for everyone. At Wesley House in Louisville we'd decorate with a different theme each year and we had quite a num-

ber of communitywide activities.

There are many highlights to community center life: graduation of kindergartners, parties, new programs, banquets, and all kinds of celebrations. Many times I thanked God that we made it through such programs as day camp, where, for example, we traveled all over the city of Chicago via public transportation, and sometimes by chartered bus or on foot, and not one of our group was lost or hurt and nothing was stolen. These are a few more high points:

- Serving on the deaconess/home missionary executive committee and the planning committee for the Centennial Convocation in Kansas City.
- Speaking at Board of Global Ministries for the 100th anniversary of deaconess and home missionary service.
- Attending the Women's Division Assemblies in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; St. Louis, Missouri; Louisville, Kentucky; and Kansas City, Missouri.

Through the years, I've seen many significant social changes, such as the involvement of agencies in issues of integration. Some social changes came about when mission projects began to become involved with government programs and accept government funds. Drugs became a part of social life in communities. Another significant social change was the "professionalization" of the workplace with the addition of strict job descriptions, timeclocks, the 40-hour work week, and enforcement of U.S. Labor Department guidelines and regulations.

Nevertheless, working as a deaconess has been enriching, exciting, and rewarding beyond anything I imagined when I first heard Grace Steiner in chapel at National College say that the church was looking for deaconesses. At that time, being a deaconess made sense. There were training, structures for placement, and institutions to be placed in.

God has blessed me beyond anything I deserve. I am thankful for so many friends, so many opportunities for service, and so many experiences that helped me grow in the Christian faith.



### **Rosie Ann Cobb\***

*Deaconess*

Born June 27, 1909, in Richmond, Kentucky

Consecrated August 1, 1935 (Home Missionary)

Transferred to Deaconess September 1, 1957

Retired June 1, 1971

### **Record of Service**

1935-45	Teacher/Superintendent, Sager-Brown Home and Godman School, Baldwin, Louisiana
1945-51	Leave of Absence
1951-71	Teacher/Superintendent, Sager-Brown Home, Baldwin, Louisiana

It was through the Woman's Home Missionary Society that I was able to obtain an education. The best way that I could express my gratitude was by serving and helping others.

I received my public education at a small school in my home county of Madison in Kentucky. After finishing public school, I left home and went to the nearest town, Richmond, to attend high school. This was a distance of 20 miles from my home in Union City, so for four years I worked for a white family after school and lived on their property.

While in high school and college I was active in the Girl Reserves, Queen Esther, Epworth League, and church and school choirs.

I started my college work at Clark University in Atlanta with a scholarship from the Woman's Home Missionary Society, one of the merging groups of the Woman's Division of Christian Service. That scholarship made it possible for me to live in Warren Hall at the university. I attended Clark, but after two years of trying to finish college during the Depression, I found it necessary to drop out. The Woman's Home Missionary Society came to my rescue again and made it possible for me to complete my college education.

I went to Peck Hall at New Orleans University in the fall of 1932 with the aid of a scholarship from the Society. May 23, 1935, marked the final date of a hard struggle to finish college. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics with a minor in biology. I owe the victory to God and the Woman's Home Missionary Society.

After graduating from college, I entered service as a home missionary and taught mathematics, science, and home economics at the Godman School in Baldwin, Louisiana. I served as church school superintendent, class leader, and choir member at Trinity Methodist Church in Baldwin. And I was also Secretary of Student Work for the Woman's Society of Christian Service of the Louisiana Conference.

In 1938 I studied during the summer at Iowa State College.

In 1943 I became superintendent of the Sager-Brown Home and Godman School in Baldwin. Sager-Brown was the only home for Negro children under the Methodist Church at that time. I remained there until I retired as its director in 1971. During that time I went to the University of Cincinnati in Ohio for graduate study in home economics. I transferred from the home missionary to the deaconess relationship in 1957.

*\*Editor's Note:* For health reasons, Rosie Ann Cobb was unable to respond personally to the questionnaire. Her story was composed from material in her file.



## **Pacita Gomintong del Amen**

*Deaconess*

Born August 30, 1945, Salcedo, Ilocos Sur, Philippines

Consecrated May 1968 (Northwest Philippines Annual Conference)

Transferred to U.S. Church, April 1992

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### **Record of Service**

1967-69	Local Church Deaconess and District Youth Coordinator, Atabay, San Salcedo, Philippines
1969-71	District Deaconess, District Youth Coordinator, St. Thomas, Pagangpang, and Bitong, Philippines
1971-72	Local Church Deaconess, Tayug, Pangasinan, Philippines
1972-73	Local Church Deaconess, Asintan, Philippines
1973-74	Local Church Deaconess, Salcedo, Ilocos Sur, Philippines
1974-77	Study Leave
1977-91	Withdrawn
1992-	Linda Valley Convalescent Hospital, Loma Linda, California

Deaconesses and Bible women were assigned to my local church in the Philippines for a year or more. Their strong Christian commitment inspired me. Rallies, Sunday school, and other church activities enriched my Christian experiences. During my high school days, I stayed in a parsonage with my aunt, who is a deaconess and a minister's wife. Her life and teachings inspired me to become a deaconess, even though she kept telling me that there was not much monetary reward.

My local church recommended me to Harris Memorial College in Manila in 1963. Four years of study at Harris was not easy. I was given housework every morning to prepare me for the future, because deaconesses in the field had to live in boarding houses. The teachers at Harris were loving and supportive and the subjects we took were relevant.

On Sundays we were assigned to nearby churches. We helped with the Sunday schools and youth and adult ministries. Each summer vacation I did my summer field work in local churches, conducting vacation church school as the principal teacher, leading youth week, and also helping with adult activities.

At the end of the summer, the district deaconesses evaluated me and gave a report to the college. Working in the field was good training.

One summer before my graduation, I was assigned to a local church that had lots of young children, youth, and adults. The congregation wanted me to stay and work with them as a deaconess. I told them it would be much better if I went back to Harris and graduated, but I promised them that I would return. And I did. (My husband is from that same church.)

The training at Harris was very rigid but I don't regret the time I spent there. It is a great Christian institution for deaconesses. I graduated from Harris in 1967 with a major in Christian education.

My first assignment was in Atabay and Pias, San Salcedo. I stayed in one church for a week and another the next week. As a Christian education director, I helped in the Sunday school in all departments. I also organized the junior leagues and visited homes in the community.

In addition to my local church responsibilities, the district assigned me as District Youth Coordinator for three years. In 1969 they transferred me to St. Thomas, Pagangpang, and Bitong churches for two years. These were three neighborhood churches with many children, youth, and adults. On top of that, they assigned me as the district traveling deaconess for Ilocos South District, supervising seven other deaconesses.

I planned district activities for Christian education. I taught the School for Christian Youth Development for six years. And I served as officer of the district United Methodist Women and vice-president of the Conference Deaconess Board for two years.

Part of my responsibility was to help conduct evangelistic campaigns along with other deaconesses and ministers. Between 1971 and 1974 I worked in several different towns. For the next three years I went on study leave for my bachelor's degree in elementary education. While working on my degree, I served as a ladies' dormitory matron in a Methodist facility.

For two years I taught in the public elementary schools and on weekends I had assignments at several local churches. I got married in 1983, and the very next year I was back in school, but in the United States this time, studying to be a licensed vocational nurse.

Since 1985 I've worked at a convalescent hospital as a nurse in charge of medications, and served as chairperson for Christian education in the Filipino American Island Empire Ministry.

With regard to social changes and social issues, I recall conducting family planning seminars and addressing the issues of drunkenness, smoking, and gambling through lectures, institutes, and rallies.

Both of my parents live with me in Loma Linda, California. My brother and three sisters are back home in the Philippines. One of my sisters is a deaconess.



## **Dolores Diaz**

*Deaconess*

Born August 11, 1897, in Rio Grande, Texas

Consecrated March 14, 1927      Retired September 1, 1962

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### **Record of Service**

1927-30	Homer Toberman Mission, Los Angeles, California
1930-37	Wolff Settlement, Tampa, Florida
1937-38	Sabbatical
1938-39	Leave of Absence
1939-43	Valley Institute, Pharr, Texas
1943-44	Wesley House, Key West, Florida
1944-45	Leave of Absence
1945-49	Teacher, Boylan-Haven School, Jacksonville, Florida
1949-50	Sabbatical
1950-52	Teacher, Boylan-Haven School, Jacksonville, Florida
1952-53	Neighborhood House, Calexico, California
1953-55	Whosoever Community House, San Antonio, Texas
1955-62	Robincroft Rest Home, Pasadena, California

I retired as a deaconess in 1962 at the age of 65. I am 95 years old now. I am losing my eyesight, so it was difficult for me to sit down and write about these memories. But I wanted to share some of the more interesting experiences I've had in the various places I've served as a deaconess.

I've crisscrossed the country, serving in California at Homer Toberman Settlement in Los Angeles and Robincroft Rest Home in Pasadena; in Florida at Wolff Settlement in Tampa, Boylan-Haven School in Jacksonville, and Wesley House in Key West; and in Texas at Valley Institute in Pharr.

I studied at Westmoreland College in San Antonio, Texas, earning an A.A. degree in 1924. I received my bachelor's degree from Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1927 and my master's from Scarritt in 1938.

Some of my experiences have been quiet and settling, such as helping to make an elderly woman in Los Angeles feel comfortable with her new dentures. Others have been momentarily unsettling, as was the case of a young lady who rang the doorbell of the center in Tampa early one morning. She had a note that said she was going to kill herself. The lady had with her two girls, aged 9 and 11, and they appeared nervous. I told them not to be afraid, that their mother would be fine, and that they should go outdoors and play while I talked with her.

I told the mother that God did not want her to take her life. That she should instead get

the girls ready for school and herself dressed to go look for a job. I prepared breakfast for them. The mother found work at a restaurant, and she and her family attended church the following Sunday.

I've had a great many experiences in community center work. I recall my first day at work when the minister asked for assistance with the summer camp since one worker was out ill. The head deaconess looked at me and said, "Why not Miss Diaz?" I told her I did not have any experience teaching summer camp. The minister assured us that everything was planned and that I would be in charge of the "Humming Birds," and do crafts with the 12- and 14-year-olds. The second night of camp one of the girls, under the pretense of going to the rest room, stole away to be with a group of her friends and have a good time. I had to break up their secret rendezvous and remind them of the camp rules.

I taught high school Spanish at Boylan-Haven School. One morning I felt something was wrong. The atmosphere was heavy. I prayed that the students would tell me what was wrong and when they did, that I would have the right words to say. Finally the students told me that they were having problems with a teacher. I offered them suggestions on how they could improve their behavior. They followed my suggestions and later told me how the situation had improved for them.

Wherever I served, I always prayed and found answers to my prayers and how to help others in need.



### **Ellen Ronas Dizon**

*Deaconess*

Born June 25, 1958, in Manila, Philippines

Commissioned May 13, 1979 (Philippines Central Conference)

Transferred to U.S. Church in April, 1990

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#### **Record of Service**

1978-81	Director of Christian Education, Gatbuca United Methodist Church, Philippines
1981-84	Withdrawn from Deaconess Service
1984-86	Volunteer Worker, Polo United Methodist Church, Philippines
1986-88	Reinstated October 23, 1986 Kindergarten Teacher, Polo United Methodist Church, Philippines
1988-89	Leave of Absence
1989-	Director of Christian Education, Grace United Methodist Church, San Francisco, California

My family's involvement in the church as well as my own desire to work with children and



youth in the church were factors in my decision to become a deaconess.

I earned my Bachelor of Arts degree in Christian education at Harris Memorial College in the Philippines in 1978. I had a year's probation and then I was commissioned as a deaconess in 1979. In addition, I attended seminars, retreats, and summer Bible studies for women.

One of the most difficult things for me to do was to leave my family in order to take up a deaconess assignment. When I was appointed by the bishop in the Philippines, I had to leave my parents and sisters and take up my work in a distant town.

I served for two years as a deaconess at the United Methodist Church in Bulacan. My second appointment was as a kindergarten teacher. I came to the United States in 1988. In 1989 I moved to my present assignment as a deaconess at Grace United Methodist Church in San Francisco, California.

When Grace employed me, it meant staying in California and not going back to the Philippines. I have two children whom I have not seen since 1988. Grace Church has offered to sponsor me and my family to live in California permanently. Unfortunately my documentation papers are still being processed by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. I'm waiting to receive approval so that my children will be allowed to join me here. This is the most difficult situation that my husband and I have ever faced.

In the Philippines, I had been appointed to a church where the pastor served part-time. My responsibilities as a pastoral worker were very far-reaching. They included preaching, administering communion, conducting funeral services, visiting parishioners, and leading congregational worship.

I have also written Sunday school material as well as curriculum materials for The United Methodist Church Central Conference Board of Education. In 1981 I wrote a youth Bible study called "Thy Kingdom Come" for the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. In 1982 I wrote a resource called "Caring for Them" for a daily vacation Bible school unit.

Since 1990, I have worked with the Youth Council of California-Nevada Filipino American Ministries as Director of Youth Ministries. The day after Christmas each year, I convene an annual gathering of youth; we call it the Christmas Institute, Schools of Mission and Faith. We work to bring young people to Jesus Christ and to equip them to become His faithful disciples.

At Grace United Methodist, I've started a Christian education program in which the children, youth, and young adults become involved in the church's ministry.

One goal is to begin Filipino lessons to convey Filipino values, culture, and tradition to the young people. There are some Filipino Americans who do not want to be called Filipinos. We see a communication gap between grandparents, parents, and children. Many do not want to learn the Filipino language or values. We want them to understand and appreciate the history of the Filipino people along with their values and cultural traditions. We also want to start a student center for Filipino American students and a day care center.



## **Clara Jean Ester**

*Deaconess*

Born February 17, 1948, in Memphis, Tennessee

Commissioned October 23, 1986

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### **Record of Service**

1986-           Program Director, Dumas Wesley Community Center,  
                  Mobile, Alabama

My parents were a major influence in my life. They were people who strove to look beyond differences of race, religion, sex, and class. They taught me to do the same. My church also played a vital role in aiding my parents to teach me Christian values and responsibilities.

When I was growing up, I was cared for at the Bethlehem Center in Memphis, Tennessee. It provided a "significant other" influence in my life. Observing the performance of the deaconesses at that center in their day-to-day work helped to cultivate in me the desire to be a deaconess, too.

My years of volunteer and staff service at Bethlehem Center, plus my years of service at Dumas Wesley Community Center in Mobile, Alabama, were good preparation. As I observed the needs of low-income families and worked as a community organizer, I was led to the realization that I could do my job better with a formal relationship to the church, and I applied to become a deaconess. I was commissioned on October 23, 1986.

There are many challenges in my work as program director at Dumas Wesley. It was especially difficult when I was first confronted with serving a predominantly white constituency in a neighborhood that had become predominantly black. It was also hard to accept that although the agency had been church-related from its very beginning, not all churches provided strong support, even though the needs were very great. For some, it is easier to support mission overseas than to confront the Third World conditions here at home. It is an ongoing challenge for me to deal successfully with the local power structures in order to be effective and yet not compromise my own principles.

There are also many highlights and great satisfactions that come from being a part of this agency as it now serves the community that surrounds it. I personally was involved in planning its new directions and seeing them implemented, and today there is a broader acceptance of the agency not only by those who are served but also by the wider community. By working directly with individual families, many of them in crisis, it is possible to provide leadership and economic opportunities that ultimately bring about dramatic changes in the family structure. In many instances, solutions have been found with and for people with severe problems, particularly for those individuals who will not or cannot communicate effectively with the institutions that control their lives (police, school systems, welfare, etc.).

The acquisition of a 37,000 square foot facility that now serves as a multipurpose community center for our neighborhood of 14,000 people is the biggest highlight. It has been encouraging to see the development of the complex over the last decade, which has allowed us to expand in the areas of teenage pregnancy prevention, senior citizens' services, gang prevention programs, after-school activities for children, day care services, and programs for parents. And we're still capable of growing.

Serving the Children's Trust Fund for the state has meant helping to determine how those funds will be spent. Target areas have included after-school programs, "Parents as First Teachers," and teenage pregnancy programs.

As part of the leadership movement in the city, our effort is to try to improve conditions and help prevent the problems that develop. Working in a community center today is much harder than it was ten years ago. I'm convinced that the only answer to many modern problems is "prevention."



### **Beatrice Fernandez**

*Deaconess*

Born September 16, 1925, in Hillsboro, Texas

Commissioned December 12, 1950

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#### **Record of Service**

1950-52	Kindergarten Teacher, Valley Institute, Pharr, Texas
1952-68	Kindergarten Teacher, Houchen Settlement, El Paso, Texas
1968-72	Elementary Teacher, Burleson School, El Paso, Texas
1972-74	Remedial Reading Teacher, Hawkins School, El Paso, Texas
1974-76	Teacher, UpGrowth Program, El Paso Public Schools, El Paso, Texas
1978-	Assistant Principal, Travis Elementary School, El Paso, Texas

I was 13 when I became a member of the Line Street Methodist Church. It was a very special day for me, because that Sunday afternoon I had found my father's New Testament. My dad had died suddenly at work, and I missed him. His Testament was an English/Spanish translation. On one side of the page I could read the English version and on the opposite page the Spanish version. I became interested and could understand the words of Jesus. It was as if He were speaking directly to me. As I read, I could feel His love for me and a wonderful joy and excitement. I must have read most of the afternoon, for I suddenly heard my mother's voice calling me to eat supper.

I was excited, for I had discovered my friend, Jesus, and wanted to share His great love with others. Little did I know then that I was embarking on a spiritual journey and the beginning of a long adventure with my friend, Jesus.

My parents wanted us to have a good education and accomplish what they had been unable to. However, it was difficult for a widow to rear four children. I had a great desire to go to college and to travel and leave Hillsboro, Texas. I had experienced and seen so much prejudice. I had seen students teasing and throwing rocks at George, an elderly African American. I had seen the dislike and hatred some of the people had toward Hispanics. I had read about God's love but had seen very little of it revealed in my part of the world. I would often cry silently at night and would express my feelings to my friend, Jesus.

When I graduated from high school, I wanted to attend Hillsboro Junior College, but I knew we could not afford it. However, God provided a way. The college librarian offered me a part-time job so that I could complete my first two years of college.

I had been playing the piano at the Mexican Methodist Mission. I had also been working with the young people and teaching the children's Sunday school class. Our pastor, the Reverend Mendiola, had his church in Waco, Texas. He used to travel the 30 miles on the streetcar each Sunday. One evening as he waited at a bus stop, he overheard some women sharing their disappointment. Their Baptist church had a scholarship to Baylor University for someone interested in missionary work, but they had been unable to locate a person who wanted to go into full-time Christian service. "I know someone," my pastor interrupted, and as if I were in a dream, I met with the scholarship committee in a Baptist church in Waco and received a scholarship to Baylor University for my last two years of college. God makes a way where there seems to be none. When one door closed, another one opened.

I surrendered my life to full-time Christian service at a youth retreat in Kerrville, Texas. A member of the Woman's Society of Christian Service (WSCS), la hermana Alvarez, took my name and some information. Through the kindness of the South Central Jurisdiction WSCS and the women in the Rio Grande Conference, I received a scholarship to Scarritt College where I obtained my master's degree.

My first appointment was in Pharr, Texas, at Valley Institute. I taught kindergarten classes, worked with clubs, and supervised church kindergartens in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Then my mother became very ill and I took a leave of absence. After her death, I worked at Houchen Community Center for 15 glorious years.

I was impressed and inspired to be living in the community center in the barrio of South El Paso with 17 deaconesses and US-2s. We served as nurses, teachers, social workers, bookkeepers, and dieticians. The entire block was called Friendship Square. Four buildings were located on the block: Newark Maternity Hospital, Houchen Community Center, Houchen Day Care Center, and El Buen Pastor Methodist Church.

I not only directed the day care center but also was a club worker and taught English and citizenship classes to adults in the evenings. All of us assisted in the many church activities.

We provided nursery school classes and kindergarten classes before the El Paso Public Schools offered them. We taught the Hispanic children English and prepared them for first grade. The elementary schools in South El Paso were very impressed with our early childhood education program and with the club activities.

We closed our nursery school classes and our kindergarten classes when the public schools began providing those services. By this time, the mission emphasis and recruitment in The United Methodist Church had weakened. Of the 17 deaconesses and US-2s with whom I had lived and worked at Houchen, I was the only deaconess left. Most of the deaconesses had either retired, married, or moved closer to their families.

I had two great desires: to return to college and to teach. I began taking evening classes at the University of Texas in El Paso. I applied to teach in the El Paso public schools and began teaching a fourth grade class in 1968. I was surprised that the students could not read at the fourth grade level and wanted to help them. I began taking reading classes at the university each evening and applied the suggestions the instructors gave me. To my amazement, the stu-

dents improved. I became so interested in reading that I continued attending classes until I received my reading certificate and my supervisor's and mid-management certificates.

I taught remedial reading classes for three years and then was asked to be a teacher leader for the federal Title I Primary Reading Program. I trained and supervised 30 teachers who taught in the UpGrowth Reading Program. We diagnosed and worked with second and third grade children who were reading below grade level. The program was very successful and I enjoyed seeing the children's improvement.

Subsequently I applied for the position of assistant principal and received the promotion. I have been at Travis Elementary School for many years. My various positions in the public schools have been deaconess appointments where I have served Hispanic children. I have tried to help children make a smooth transition from Spanish to English classes, because I do not want them to go through the difficulties I encountered my first year in school.

The first day I attended public school, I remember skipping all the way as my mother walked me to school, but my happiness disappeared in the classroom. I discovered that I could not understand what the children and the teacher said, nor could they understand my Spanish. The teacher would often shout at me, thinking that would help me to understand. Instead, it only served to frighten me and make me self-conscious. I repeated first grade because I did not know English. This further eroded my self-image, and I became a loner, shy and withdrawn.

Disappointments are often God's appointment, because through my experiences in school came the need and desire to assist Hispanic children with their education and to try to give them pleasant experiences.

I have been privileged to witness many significant social changes. For instance, sometimes high school students used to be punished for speaking Spanish in school. Now we have bilingual education in the public schools. Often Hispanic teachers could not obtain a teaching position in some of Texas' public schools. Now they are able to teach in all schools. Many have attained administrative positions and some are on the school boards. Although prejudice still exists, some attitudes have improved.

Another important social change is in the makeup of the student body in Travis. Because the neighborhood was Hispanic, the school used to have mostly Hispanic students, until busing occurred. Now we have all nationalities. It is a beautiful experience for children. We have children who have been to Europe and have returned to share their experiences.

Unfortunately I have seen the decline in the recruitment of deaconesses. Home missionaries are no longer commissioned. Many United Methodist schools, hospitals, and community centers have been closed.

I feel that God has given me a special call to assist children with their education, for my mother could neither read nor write, but she instilled in me the desire for education and the importance of teaching others.

God has a map and a plan for each of us if we only take the time to listen and be with Him daily. It is only through and with my friend, Jesus, that I have been able to work. He is the one guiding and directing me. For with God all things are possible.



## **Mildred Garcia**

*Deaconess*

Born December 18, 1932, in New York, New York

Commissioned April 14, 1991

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### **Record of Service**

1991- Assistant Records Manager, General Board of Global Ministries, New York, New York

My mother was a strong Methodist, while my father was a Roman Catholic. My in-depth knowledge of both Methodist and Catholic approaches to religious faith gave me understanding and an appreciation of how broadly God's Word and His work can be viewed. I feel there are many denominational approaches to worshipping and understanding God's will in this world. The important issue is how we live out our understanding of His will.

Five years ago I began considering some new directions for myself and looked into the deaconess relationship. What appealed to me was the commitment of deaconesses to full-time service. God has blessed me with many gifts that I share as a deaconess. I know two languages and two cultures—English and Spanish. I have experience in my church, my community, and my job. Being a deaconess is the fulfillment of a dream I had when I was a student at Robinson School in Puerto Rico.

As I grew up, I wanted to be a nurse and enter the army—an unlikely beginning for someone who finally became a deaconess. I felt that I could make a contribution and get good skills in the army. But my father objected. My parents sent me to Robinson School because they felt it would be meaningful to my spiritual development. While at Robinson, I felt my call to mission service. During the time I spent at Robinson, I received a more formal understanding of Methodism. My family felt that it was a blessing that I could attend Robinson School.

It was during those years that the idea of giving service to the church developed into a personal goal. I met a deaconess there who meant a lot to me and I dreamed of becoming a deaconess someday. Three years after I left Robinson I met that same deaconess at my local church. I began to accompany her occasionally on visits to families that were in need of Christian guidance.

I came to New York City in 1959 seeking employment. For ten years I struggled with learning English and trying to escape low-paying jobs. I took English and secretarial courses to prepare me for an office position. My faith was my refuge during those times, because there was no one to help me or show me how to improve. I depended upon my faith for strength.

Twenty-two years ago I started working for the General Board of Global Ministries. I have filled many different positions at Global Ministries, ranging from support staff in the Service Department and in Central Records of the World Division to executive staff in the Na-

tional Division. I am currently Records Manager for the National Division and Assistant Records Manager for the General Board.

Through my job I've learned a lot about the value of missions at home and abroad. As a staffperson I try to put into daily practice what I have learned: to be caring, to be in partnership, and to be engaged in working with and for persons in need. But above all I try to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to everybody, by thought, word, and deed.

The meaningful thing for me is to serve God and to be a part of Christ's ministry as a deaconess. I wish more racial and ethnic minority women could know the joy, sisterhood, and spiritual strength that come from being a deaconess.



### **Lucile Holliday\***

*Deaconess*

Born September 25, 1900, in Glasgow, Missouri

Consecrated June, 1923 (Home Missionary)

Transferred to Deaconess September, 1957      Retired October 1, 1965

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#### **Record of Service**

1923-60	Day Nursery Supervisor, Mothers' Memorial Center, Cincinnati, Ohio
1960-65	Executive Director, Wesley Child Care Center, Cincinnati, Ohio

My Baptist Sunday school teacher and a Methodist home missionary were my initial sources of information about mission service. I was recruited by two Methodist deaconesses from the Iowa National Training School and by a Sunday school teacher to join the deaconess relationship.

I went on to become a teacher and nursery/day care worker, serving first as a home missionary and since 1957 as a deaconess.

I had received training in office practice while a high school student. I continued training at Iowa National Training School, graduating in 1923, and then I studied abnormal psychology, child psychology, sociology, and organization and administration of recreation at Cincinnati University.

As a part of my training and experience, I worked with children in the dramatic arts, taught club groups and vacation Bible school, and served as a leader for boy's and girl's clubs, Campfire Girls, and other youth groups.

All of my years of service were at one project, Mothers' Memorial Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, which became Wesley Child Care Center in 1962. I retired in 1965 after 39 years and four months of service.

*\*Editor's Note:* For health reasons, Lucile Holliday was unable to respond personally to the questionnaire. Her story was composed from material in her file.





## **Juanita Locker Ivie**

*Deaconess*

Born April 3, 1928, in Cincinnati, Ohio

Commissioned March 18, 1976      Retired June 30, 1990

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### **Record of Service**

1974-76	Superintendent, Sager Brown School, Baldwin, Louisiana
1976-79	Executive Director, Youth in Crisis, Atlanta, Georgia
1979-85	Field Representative, Finance and Field Service, National Division, General Board of Global Ministries, New York, New York
1985-90	Director of Stewardship, General Board of Discipleship, Nashville, Tennessee

It was my home environment that influenced me to become a deaconess. My father's father, grandfather, and great grandfather were ministers in the Disciples of Christ Church. My mother's father, a coal mine foreman, founded many Baptist churches as he and his crew moved from mine site to mine site. Christianity has been my lifestyle from early memory—church, family prayer periods, and community service. I was never really comfortable “doing” the social scene. The church and easing others' needs have always been my prime reasons for being.

Early on, with my parent's support, I attended and participated in community worship services. I was baptized when I was six years of age. I canvassed the streets of Cincinnati, soliciting money for both the Red Cross and Community Chest. I taught Sunday school, sang in the choir, substituted as organist, and served as a counselor at church camp. All of these activities helped prepare me for my mission service.

More than anything else, the most difficult situations I had to deal with were prejudice and doubt (P&D). I've experienced P&D from heads of general agencies, immediate supervisors, colleagues, pastors, district superintendents, and church members. In most instances I've prevailed, but “it ain't been easy.”

The most significant societal changes I've faced have been the closing of institutions where minority children had been given the opportunity to learn, discover, and become fulfilled and fulfilling persons; where role models were prevalent; and where self-esteem was given the chance to blossom.

Two examples of children who benefitted from these special institutions stand out: One six-year-old “incorrigible” child—disruptive, hyperactive—learned eagerly when placed in the right classroom. And a nineteen-year-old boy who “was never going to learn” experienced the joy and pride of receiving his high school diploma when he was taken out of public school and placed in a private United Methodist School.



There were many highlights in my ministry. Although I was not always well received in churches or conferences as a national-level staffperson, I always felt my work had been well done when doubts disappeared and prejudices—at least against one black woman—were dampened.

I enjoyed seeing and experiencing the elation of a local church or conference that reached and/or surpassed its financial goal. Then, I knew, deep down, that individual and corporate spirits had been revived.

I have one regret: that I was not able to serve longer. I've fought for changes throughout my work experience, and I just got *tired* of fighting.



**Josephine L. Lewis**

*Deaconess*

Born March 9, 1928, in Chicago, Illinois

Commissioned October 24, 1985

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**Record of Service**

1985-87

Leave of Absence

1988-

Director, Phoebe's Place, Maple Park United Methodist Church,  
Chicago, Illinois

I became interested in the things of the Lord in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1975 I prayed mightily and sought God's will for my life. It was revealed to me that I should "do the work of a deaconess."

The amazing part of it was that I did not even know of the existence of such an office! In 1977 I was consecrated a deaconess in my former denomination. I served as a parish visitor, going to see our sick and shut-in members. I also assisted a hospital chaplain.

In His omniscience, I believe that God had been preparing me for this work all of my life. As a young wife and mother, I would take one or two college courses at a time, just out of sheer boredom. I had earned enough credits over the years for an Associate of Arts degree from Wilson Junior College in Chicago, Illinois, and eventually a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree in elementary education from Roosevelt University, also in Chicago. I became a certified teacher and taught for several years.

But it seemed my education was not complete. A spiritual awakening led me to Bible college to learn more about the Holy Scriptures. God's plan began to manifest itself in my life.

In 1983 I became a United Methodist. Upon meeting the requirements, I was commissioned a deaconess in The United Methodist Church in 1985. I had always had an innate love for seniors. It seemed a natural progression that, as a United Methodist, I would become the founder and director of a senior citizens' center at our church, the Maple Park United Meth-

odist Church in Chicago, Illinois. I called the center "Phoebe's Place."

Since the Office of Deaconess is virtually unknown among black United Methodists, the name "Phoebe's Place," affords me an opening to teach those who don't know about it that the Office of Deaconess has existed since the first century church and that Phoebe was the first and only deaconess acknowledged by name in the Scriptures (Romans 16:1).

Helping senior citizens who "fall through the cracks" in our social services system is indeed rewarding for me. The transportation we provide enables many people to get to medical appointments, food pantries, and grocery stores, and to take care of other important business matters. Many of our seniors are unaware of the myriad resources and benefits available to them. In order to keep them informed, we dispense as much information as possible.

In 1991 we helped three people raise their income for life by bringing to their attention little known facts that, when acted upon, resulted in big benefits. One senior was so disbelieving that she refused to fill out the form. I had to beg for the necessary information and fill out the form myself. Now, she is glad that I was so persistent. We offer intergenerational activities and we've taught crafts in the local school.

The need for constant fundraising is a difficult but unavoidable challenge. Another is persuading people to volunteer their services, their resources, and their time—to give back to society some of the blessings they have received. It has been a slow process but our ranks of volunteers are growing.

I thoroughly enjoy my work and feel that this is the Lord's will for my life at this time.

As a former educator, I thought that perhaps I'd be more effective if I had training in social work, so I enrolled in a three-year master's degree program in social work. I earned my M.S.W. in August 1992 and was chosen as one of the student speakers at my commencement exercise. The contacts that I've made through classmates are proving to be very valuable. I hope to expand the services that Phoebe's Place provides in the not too distant future.

I praise God for leading me into this work.



### **Marian T. Martin**

*Deaconess*

Born May 15, 1929, in Wadesboro, North Carolina

Commissioned March 18, 1976

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#### **Record of Service**

1976-79	Social Worker, Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center, Brooklyn, New York
1979-1990	Assistant General Secretary, Mission Education and Cultivation Program Department, General Board of Global Ministries New York, New York
1990-91	Acting Director, Gulfside Assembly, Waveland, Mississippi
1991-92	Assistant General Secretary, Mission Education and Cultivation Program

I became a deaconess late in life. I did not prepare for it; life prepared me for it. As I look over the progression of situations and experiences, it was inevitable. God does work in a mysterious way!

Growing up in Wadesboro, North Carolina, in the '30s and '40s was my most memorable experience. Surrounded by love of family, school, and the AME Zion Church, I thought all was right with the world. My parents believed that childhood should be the happiest time of one's life. We were therefore insulated and protected from the harsh realities that existed. My brother and I always had food, clothing, and shelter. In Sunday school we collected money for the poor (whoever *they* were!), memorized the 10 Commandments and other Bible verses, learned the value of the Protestant work ethic, and believed that we could become President of the United States or anything else that we chose to be.

Segregation had been written into the law, so we understood "our place" and learned all of the skills necessary for survival in a segregated society. We had fun in the black school. Teachers were loving and caring—part of the extended family. It was much later that I learned about inequality.

I learned about the Depression in school when I became interested enough to ask questions. My mother explained that she was earning \$40 a month as a public school teacher, and my dad made \$12 a week in a grocery store.

I attended a Lutheran boarding school in Greensboro, North Carolina. Our teachers were white German missionaries who had served in Africa. They were dedicated and very inspirational. They opened up new vistas for me. I had heard that there were black missionaries but had never met one, so it never even occurred to me to pursue that relationship. We were required to attend church and memorize the Lutheran catechism.

Graduating from a Presbyterian college required church attendance and courses in religion. By the time I finished college, I felt that I'd had enough of school and church. I stayed away from church for a while until the "storms of life began raging."

When my husband and I started a family, I found myself trying to protect our four sons from the harsh realities of life, but my second son, Eric, told me in no uncertain terms that he wanted to know about my painful experiences. So I learned early that my parents' way would not work for us. Young people need to be aware and informed of all of life's experiences.

It was not until I met Allene M. Ford that I began to think seriously about becoming a deaconess. She embodied all of the qualities that represent for me what this relationship is all about. My training and experience were in teaching and social work. She was able to help me see that I could serve in either capacity within the framework of my church. I was commissioned in March 1976.

Prior to my becoming a bureaucrat, my work had always been related to children. I'd worked in public schools, social services, and medical social work. I have worked with the physically challenged and those with emotional problems. At the Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn, I was instrumental in starting a special program for teenaged parents. I've entered all of my work with my parents' philosophy—that childhood should be the happiest time of one's life, though not neglectful of today's realities.

The most painful situation for me was watching a four-year-old die of leukemia over a period of four years.

I will always be distressed by the presence of racism, especially in the church.

Joy comes when I see a child emerging from a dysfunctional situation into responsible adulthood.

In 1978 I became Assistant General Secretary in what is now the Mission Education and

Cultivation Program Department of the General Board of Global Ministries. In 1989 I was seconded to serve as the Acting Director of Gulfside Assembly, Waveland, Mississippi, where my management and community organization skills enabled reactivation of programs at that historic institution. Happily, my pre-retirement assignment is also at Gulfside serving as Director of Mission Education.

I'm thankful to God for calling me to this very special ministry.



### **Jose M. "Chic" Martinez**

*Home Missionary*

Born July 29, 1906, in Antonito, Colorado

Appointed September 1, 1943      Retired June 1, 1973

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#### **Record of Service**

1943-72      Coach/Teacher, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico

As a small boy, I attended the United Brethren in Christ mission school in Velarde, New Mexico. I was part of the first high school graduating class at McCurdy School in Española, New Mexico, in 1926. After I graduated from McCurdy, I went on to York College in York, Nebraska. I had a dream of someday returning to McCurdy School as a missionary, but first I taught in the public schools in Antonito, Colorado. After 15 years I was given a position at McCurdy School as a teacher and athletics coach. I had fulfilled my dream. I was one of the first graduates of McCurdy to return and serve on the faculty.

I taught at McCurdy from 1943, the year I was appointed as a home missionary, until 1972. I never stopped studying, though. I enrolled in mathematics courses and became head of the mathematics department at the school. I also assisted in coaching football, basketball, baseball, and track.

I was fortunate not to have discipline problems with my classes. I loved my work and looked forward to being with the faculty and students each day. I had countless heart-warming experiences while coaching athletics. We had good basketball and football teams that won at the state level. In 1962 our football team won the state championship and in 1963 and 1964 we were state runners-up in our class. We had a win-loss record in football of 86 to 30. In basketball my teams won 78 percent of all the games they played.

My mathematics students made me proud. Many of them are now engineers.

I believe that when we work in mission, we have to set the example for the people we teach. We have to live out our commitment to our principles. It was my desire to serve and to help Hispanic people, especially young people.

In 1970, during the fall homecoming activities, the football field was named for me.

A letter in the National Division's file on Jose Martinez contains the following words of praise for him:

"The missionary career of Chic is typified by the words: 'Total commitment as a teacher and a coach.' Chic's personal code of ethics, his integrity, his disciplined lifestyle and his work habits made him a respected and important figure on [McCurdy's] campus.

"His students came first in his daily routine and he held high expectations for them.

"Chic closed his teaching career at a time of great change in society and in the academic program at McCurdy. He was supportive of some changes. When he did not agree, he was still supportive of colleagues and the school in general. His opinions were valued.

"Chic Martinez always carried a full teaching load, including the advanced math classes, while coaching three sports. Academics commanded his full attention during the teaching day. Chic coached in an era when he personally repaired equipment, built apparatus, and tended the playing field. Over several years he built Martinez Field from literally a cow pasture to a fine playing field.

"In word and deed, in a dignified yet personable manner, Chic consistently lived his Christian witness. His life of service for youth is an enduring legacy on the McCurdy campus."



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**Valma Martinez\***

*Home Missionary*

Born April 28, 1911

Appointed September 1, 1943      Retired June 1, 1973

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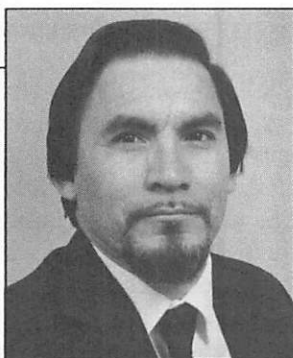
**Record of Service**

1943-72

Homemaker, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico

Valma Martinez served with her husband, Jose M. Martinez, at McCurdy School in Española, New Mexico, for 23 years. She began her service on September 1, 1943. Her motive and purpose in seeking to serve was her desire to help Spanish American youth. Her personal interests were embroidery and cooking.

*\*Editor's Note:* For health reasons, Valma Martinez was unable to respond personally to the questionnaire. Her story was composed from material in her file.



**Jose L. Palos**

*Home Missionary*

Born July 13, 1941, in Monterrey, Mexico

Commissioned April 10, 1986

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**Record of Service**

1986- Coordinator of Congregational Development, Rio Grande Conference, San Antonio, Texas

I became a home missionary because the opportunity presented itself. I had wanted to be a missionary for many years but I had not made the final decision. When the opportunity came, I took it.

I responded to the calling to the ministry when I was still in high school. I went to college and then to seminary to get my education. Later I returned to do some additional graduate work in response to another opportunity. During my missionary preparation, I served as pastor of several churches in different parts of Texas, as a campus minister, and then as the Conference Council Director. I also became involved in and served at various levels of the church. All of these experiences and studies helped me prepare for missionary service.

As a missionary, I have served as Conference Coordinator of Congregational Development in the Rio Grande Conference. Assuming that position was perhaps the most difficult challenge I have had to face. There had never been a similar position before, and the situations in other conferences were very different from those faced by the conference I served.

While a job description outlined the general area of work to be done, I had to feel my way into the job with the help of some National Division staffpersons from the General Board of Global Ministries. Learning as you work is one way to do ministry, and this is how I have been able to deal with my new situation. I am still learning.

One of the highlights of my ministry has been to be able to organize, train, and serve the District Committees on Congregational Development. These have been functioning groups in each district, so that I now serve these committees as a consultant rather than as a director. They have their own identities and take their responsibilities seriously.

Sharing the responsibility with others makes one's load much lighter. These committees have also assumed the disciplinary responsibilities for the District Boards of Church Location and Building, thus simplifying the structure and streamlining the process. They are now models for the broader church of what can be done without creating more structure and bureaucracy while at the same time giving new life to already established structures.

Another highlight of my ministry has been working with the district superintendents, the district committees, and the Conference Board of Global Ministries in establishing and developing new congregations and missions. Twenty-four new missions have been started since I



began serving this position as a missionary coordinator. While six of these were later discontinued, there has been a net gain of eighteen new missions within the last six years.

What this means is that new people are being reached for Christ and His church. Local churches and pastors are now beginning to seek new places to start new missions.

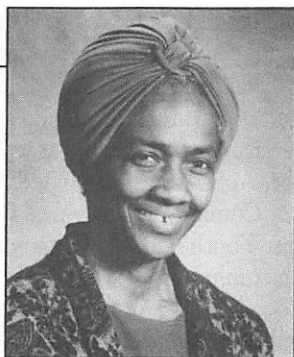
The conference has targeted four key areas for the development of new missions. Within the last year new missions have been started in three of these key areas. This has resulted in a conference that is more focused. We have been able to develop a set of conference guidelines—which the conference recently approved—for starting and developing new congregations and missions.

Training of clergy and lay leaders for new congregations or missions has become an agenda item for the conference and the districts. In addition, the conference has established a goal of creating seven Christian Discipleship Centers where laypersons can be trained. Three of the centers have already opened and are operational.

Within the last six years I have been able to work closely with 36 local churches, about one-third of the conference total, in developing and implementing their plans for construction of a church building or parsonage. The total estimated cost of these projects, to date, is about \$1.5 million. It has all been accomplished with the help of numerous Volunteers in Mission.

Unfortunately, the economic condition of many Hispanic persons has gotten worse. In this part of the country, the recession has been a depressing reality for many of the poorest segments of our population. The dramatic growth of the Hispanic population in Texas and New Mexico, the two states served by the Rio Grande Conference, continues to challenge the church. The Census Bureau reports that the Hispanic population increased by 1.4 million between 1980 and 1990. The actual increase is believed to be higher, because the Bureau has consistently undercounted Hispanic persons in these states.

In spite of all these difficulties and concerns, being listed in the *Prayer Calendar* has been a very enriching experience. I have felt very supported by people whom I do not know. I am still learning how to respond to such gestures of love and concern. I still struggle trying to raise enough funds to continue as a missionary. It is easier to raise money for someone else or for a cause or a project than for oneself.



**Phoebe A. Reynolds**

*Deaconess*

Born September 7, 1934, in New York, New York

Commissioned on November 10, 1963

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**Record of Service**

1963-68

Teacher/House Parent, Sager Brown School, Baldwin, Louisiana

1968-71

Director of Community Activities, St. Matthew United Methodist Church, Chicago, Illinois

1971-72	Sabbatical, Chicago, Illinois
1972-79	Program Consultant, Ecumenical Institute, Chicago, Illinois; Boston Massachusetts; Washington, DC
1979-80	Leave of Absence
1980-90	Education Consultant, Ecumenical Institute, Washington, DC; Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan
1990-91	Leave of Absence
1991-	Teacher, Continuing Education, Detroit Public Schools, Detroit, Michigan

I was once a US-2. My assignment was as a teacher at Sager Brown School in Baldwin, Louisiana. I liked this assignment because I was learning and growing personally and professionally. It was a steppingstone into the deaconess relationship and a natural progression in my life. I was following in the footsteps of many of the faithful who had walked the path before me.

It seems that my preparation was something that had been developing all along. I've always loved reading, learning, and helping people. The Bible was probably the first book I read. I had been reading parts of it from year to year.

Attending Sunday school as a child provided numerous opportunities to learn about the work of Christians around the world. I had become a little missionary, right at home, as I "corralled" other children in the community to go to Sunday school. I was teaching even then.

During the summers there was a month-long vacation Bible school founded and directed by a distant relative, a cousin named Allie Nelson. I looked forward to those summers, working under her tutelage. She loved her work and I loved working with her.

Attending Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, put me in an atmosphere where my Christian faith blossomed. At Paine, Dr. Ruth Bartholomew, Deaconess, became a mentor. She had a concern for students. So did other teachers like Dr. Craig, Dr. Richardson, and Dr. Cecilia Sheppard, who showed the same kind of concern. I realize now that other people can actually help you develop greater potential than you can see in yourself. So now I dedicate my energies to others, especially young people. This is my calling from God.

I attended Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, and also took classes at nearby Peabody College for Teachers and at Vanderbilt University. The experience increased my perspective as an individual and a Christian. I became a global citizen. The interaction with students from other cultures and nations set the stage for my continuing growth.

I began to understand my special relationship as a child of God. Preparation and involvement were the themes of this period of my life. I developed a sense of "trusting the universe."

I was a classroom teacher at Sager Brown School as well as a dorm director, assisting with activities in the girls' residence. At St. Matthew United Methodist Church in Chicago, Illinois, where I served as Director of Community Activities, I recruited and worked with volunteers, assisted with the Methodist Youth Fellowship, taught religious education, and did home visitation in the surrounding community.

I moved to Chicago from Louisiana in 1968 after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To say it was a "hot" summer was to describe more than the weather. The churches and other agencies were coming to terms with the urban revolts of 1967 and the assassinations of 1968. Our youth were more vocal and the churches' response was to work more closely within the urban communities and across interdenominational lines.

This was a challenging moment to be able to walk and work in faith, knowing that God indeed moves in history. Persons in leadership positions are constantly called to be open to the changes resulting from God's activity.

Some of those changes became manifest during the 1960s with the integration of Sager Brown School by white teachers, the birth of the black consciousness movement, and the civil rights struggle. A teacher's challenge is to understand herself and not grow so involved that it



becomes impossible to sense what the young people really need. Showing and communicating the compassion of Christ rather than being the heavy-handed authority in adult/child situations was sometimes difficult, as was disciplining students.

Nothing, however, can overshadow the very positive moments and memories, such as being able to work effectively with youth and at the same time communicate with their elders on behalf of the youth, or that first place award my fifth grade students and I won for a float on Africa in the local parade in Baldwin, Louisiana.

I enjoyed worshipping in a new church facility that was clearly focused on serving the community. During door-to-door visitations to the high-rise complex near St. Matthew Church, I was surprised to meet parents who knew me by name, "Phoebe." The children had already affirmed me as a new church worker in their neighborhood. My love and commitment to the well-being of the total community grew out of those years at St. Matthew.

Also while in Chicago, I served on the committee that selected a new principal for Mammere Elementary School. We were delighted when the school, under direction of the principal we recommended, was spotlighted in the local newspaper for its improvements in morale, parent participation, and academic achievement.

In 1972 I became an educational consultant at the Ecumenical Institute (Institute of Cultural Affairs). There I taught courses on the weekends, set up an Early Childhood Development Center, led intergenerational activities such as community work days, and did speaking engagements, witnessing to God's power and love.

Following my leave for study, I began teaching in the Detroit public schools' Department of Adult Education. This is my present assignment.



**Edna M. Ridley**

*Deaconess*

Born November 11, 1922, in Union Mills, North Carolina  
Commissioned January 24, 1964      Retired June 30, 1985

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**Record of Service**

1964-65	Teacher/Dorm Counselor, Boylan-Haven Mather Academy, Camden, South Carolina
1965-66	Leave for Study, Scarritt College
1966-73	Teacher/Dorm Counselor/Librarian, Sager Brown School, Baldwin, Louisiana
1973-74	Leave of Absence
1974-79	Sarah D. Murphy Home, Cedartown, Georgia
1979-85	Librarian, St. Paul United Methodist School, Tampa, Florida

Before I was invited to become a deaconess, there had been other influences in my early life that ultimately led to my decision to be of service to the Methodist Church. The first was my father. He was a minister and he gave me a strong Christian background. And the second was my dream. I had always dreamed of becoming an overseas missionary.

When my dream did not materialize as I had envisioned, the Rev. J. H. Lightsey encouraged me to become involved with the church in some other way. My chance came while I was attending Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. I was invited to become a deaconess. I consulted with my father and he agreed that this was indeed a good opportunity for me to serve the Lord.

My studies at Paine—I was majoring in philosophy and religion—became a part of my deaconess preparation. After completing a required autobiography and physical and psychological examinations, I was accepted as a candidate for deaconess service. A year of probationary work was also part of my deaconess preparation. Evelyn Berry, Ph.D., was executive director of educational work and served as my supervisor.

I was commissioned in January of 1964 by Bishop Richard Raines at Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania, and I was consecrated by Bishop Lafayette Harris in June of 1964 at the Annual Conference at Camden, South Carolina.

From August 1962 to August 1965, I was a dorm counselor at Boylan-Haven Mather Academy in Camden, South Carolina, and I also taught Bible and did guidance counseling.

From September 1965 to August 1966, I was granted a sabbatical leave to do advanced study at Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee. There I started studying the history of the Bible, only to change my emphasis later to library science.

During the latter part of 1966, I went to Sager Brown Home and School in Baldwin, Louisiana, where I served as dorm counselor. My service also included teaching Bible and setting up a library. I worked in this setting for six years.

In the early 1970s I went to Athens, Georgia, on a leave of absence. While in Athens, I obtained a job as a nurse's aide at the Hill-Haven Convalescent Center, which is now called St. Mary's. The job required that I take additional training to become more efficient as an assistant to the nurses.

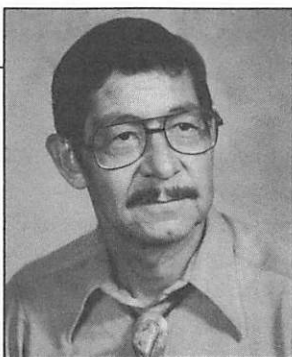
I next served at the Sarah Murphy Home for underprivileged children in Grady Junction, Georgia, and stayed there for six years.

The Saint Paul United Methodist School in Tampa, Florida, was the last place I served before my retirement on June 30, 1985.

There were many highlights during my service: working with the women of the United Methodist Church; gaining insight into various political and religious aspects of the world at a Workshop on International Affairs; and pulling together a group at the Saint Paul United Methodist Church that had fallen away. At St. Paul, the congregation was unified: black, white, and Hispanic. I worked with the English-speaking members. The pastor was Hispanic.

The major social changes I recall were the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church, and the merging of the Evangelical United Brethren, Central Jurisdiction, and Methodist Conferences into one body as The United Methodist Church. I also dealt with social changes in the form of integration when I attended college.

Through all of this, my years of service provided for intellectual, spiritual, and physical growth. "I wouldn't take nothin' for my journey—Amen!"



## **Enoch A. Rodriguez**

### *Home Missionary*

Born July 12, 1923, in Chamisal, New Mexico

Appointed August 21, 1951      Retired July 31, 1988

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### **Record of Service**

1951-88

Teacher, Coach, Director of Guidance, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico

My Christian parents and the dedicated instructors at Manual High School (a Christian boarding school sponsored by the Presbyterian Church) influenced my decision to become a home missionary. The idea was affirmed for me when I worked in the public schools. I had colleagues who did not care about anything, so I chose to get out of that kind of environment.

After I began teaching at McCurdy, my career direction was further nurtured and developed as I worked with such persons as Dr. Glen McCracken and the Misses Zella and Delia Herrick, all home missionaries who served as role models for me. I earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish and biology from the University of New Mexico and did graduate work at St. Michael's College, College of Santa Fe, and New Mexico Highlands University, earning a master's degree in education.

I worked at McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico, as a classroom instructor, athletic coach, and then as director of guidance. I served the school for a total of 39 years until I retired in 1988.

As a counselor, I had difficulty with parents who wanted "instant" improvement of their children's behavior despite the fact that the children had been neglected at home.

In 1965, my wife (Eustolia) and I prepared a well-received document on Spanish American customs, characteristics, civic mindedness, conformity to American patterns, church relations, and other issues. The document was to be used primarily as a basis for orientation of persons preparing to work among Spanish American people.

During my 39 years at McCurdy, I have seen the school advance and develop. Many of my former students have returned to the community with college degrees, well prepared for any type of advancement in the work force. It was a great opportunity to work with Christian administrators and associates.



## **Eustolia (Eustie) Rodriguez**

### *Home Missionary*

Born October 27, 1925 in Chimayo, New Mexico

Appointed August 21, 1951      Retired June 1, 1989

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### **Record of Service**

1951-79      Homemaker, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico

1979-89      Bookstore Manager, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico

My parents and Dr. and Mrs. Glen McCracken had a great impact on my decision to become a home missionary. Their Christian values and Christ-centered lives served as examples for me. They were committed to God and to all those around them.

I attended Presbyterian mission schools from first grade through twelfth. My parents worked hard to put their children through private schools. They made great sacrifices to allow me and seven of my brothers and sisters the opportunity of a Christian education.

As the wife of Enoch Rodriguez, a 39-year employee of McCurdy School at Española, New Mexico, I served for ten years as manager of the school bookstore. I retired in 1989 and now volunteer my time at the McCurdy Development Office, mailing the school's newsletters.

My biggest concern in the last few years has been that McCurdy School needs more mission-minded individuals who are dedicated and committed to helping students develop spiritually, emotionally, and physically and who will continue to make McCurdy a unique Christian institution. Some persons came with a holier-than-thou attitude and did not understand traditions different from their own. They pegged our traditions as insignificant. It was difficult dealing with those who came to the school wanting to change Hispanic traditions, which are very rich in our area of the country. Such changes would have been contrary to the tricultural ministry we were striving to nurture at McCurdy.

Being a part of the staff at McCurdy School and watching it grow was a highlight of our ministry. We were able to see our students become successful members of our society. It gave us great joy to see 75 to 80 percent of our graduates go on to attend college.

McCurdy School provided a Christian education that the public schools lacked. We are thankful for the faithful individuals who remained for many years in dedicated service at McCurdy.



## **Rosalina O. Concepcion Salyers**

### *Deaconess*

Born September 22, 1941, in the Philippines

Commissioned March, 1967 (Philippines Central Conference)

Transferred to U.S. Church, October 23, 1986

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### **Record of Service**

1966-72	Kindergarten Teacher, Knox United Methodist Church, Manila, Philippines
1972-73	Leave for Study
1974-76	Kindergarten Teacher and School Lead Teacher, Knox United Methodist Church Elementary School, Manila, Philippines
1976-80	Principal, Knox School Inc., Manila, Philippines
1980-82	Leave for Study
1982-86	Withdrawn
1986-92	Leave of Absence
1992-	Teacher, Miriam Center, United Methodist Neighborhood Centers, Memphis, Tennessee

I went to a private high school run by Methodists. During those early years, I was exposed to adults who lived a well-disciplined religious life. They never missed Sunday school, mid-week Bible study, or extension classes in the home. I became an officer of the Methodist Youth Fellowship, attended youth camps, and sang in the church and school choirs as part of my stewardship of time and talent. The disciplined prayer life exhibited by my aunts and older cousins greatly influenced me to become a deaconess.

At the time I was asked if I would like to become a full-time church worker, I had already been teaching vacation Bible school and Sunday school for two years at my home church in Manila, Philippines. It was the first time that I heard what a deaconess was. When I asked why I was singled out from among the others, I was told that my dedication had shown through. And there was something else, something "special" about me, one of the older women said. It seems I reminded her of herself when she first answered God's call to become a deaconess. She later helped me to get a scholarship from my home church so that I could attend Harris Memorial College in Manila to begin my deaconess training.

In 1966 I graduated from Harris with a bachelor's degree in kindergarten education and was consecrated as a deaconess in the Methodist Church. The following year I was commissioned during a session of annual conference.

I was appointed by the bishop to work as a weekday kindergarten deaconess in the largest church in the Philippines. I taught and served as program coordinator. It was a great ac-

complishment for me to see the growth of my class during my first year as a deaconess.

The following year we added a nursery class. The preschool continued to grow. After my second year, the parents petitioned the church to open an elementary school and I was called to organize it.

By 1969 we had a first grade class and a multigrade class approved by the government's department of education. It became the fastest-growing private elementary school in the heart of Manila. In 1970 I was voted an outstanding kindergarten teacher.

My education and job responsibilities increased together. In 1972 I became supervisor of all the Methodist preschools in the annual conference. I was also attending night classes at the time. I finished my courses for a second bachelor's degree in elementary education the next year and then went on to graduate school. Three years later I was appointed as the school's principal.

In 1977 I completed work on my Master of Arts degree in educational administration and supervision from the Philippine Christian University. And on January 7, 1980, I left the Philippines to pursue a Doctor of Education degree at the Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, as a United Methodist Crusade Scholar. That was a highlight of my ministry.

While at Vanderbilt, I made filmstrips about the Advance and taught nursery school at several United Methodist Churches in the Nashville, Tennessee, area.

I've written Bible lessons for Methodist church school publications and vacation Bible school and I'm currently writing a teaching plan so that I can become certified as a laboratory leader.

My involvement with United Methodist Women has afforded me the opportunity to attend their jurisdiction quadrennial meeting and conduct mission studies on the Philippines.

Over the past 10 years, I've experienced both emotional highs and lows. I have been very grateful for the ups. But during the low moments, I have realized my weaknesses and my need for strength to pull myself through. This was especially true during my husband's motorcycle accident, his surgery, our car accident, and the times when I was the object of prejudice at the American university I attended. One of the lowest moments in my life was my birthday, September 22, in 1990, when I had to fly to Hawaii to attend the unexpected funeral of my mother.

In American society, I have had to learn to be assertive, and to know how to sell myself in order to get a good permanent job. For several years I have had a teaching certificate from the state of Tennessee, but I was able to secure only a part-time substitute teaching position.

I'm glad to again be working in a church-related program, the United Methodist Neighborhood Centers in Memphis, in my field of child care.

I have transferred my deaconess relationship from the Philippine Deaconess Board to that of The United Methodist Church in the U.S. My being a deaconess and a consecrated diaconal minister is an affirmation of my life-long commitment to serve God through The United Methodist Church.



## **Maudessa Pittman Smith**

*Deaconess*

Born February 14, 1931, in Sandy Hook, Mississippi

Commissioned October 31, 1980

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### **Record of Service**

1980-90	Executive Director, Mississippi Rural Center, Columbia, Mississippi
1989-92	Professor, Pearl River Junior College, Sandy Hook, Mississippi
1992-	Leave of Absence

My first call to Christian service was as a child. I had a recurring dream, a vision of Jesus looking at me but not saying a word. This vision continued into my adult life, until I finally made the decision to be of service to the Lord. Once I had made up my mind to respond to the call to serve, the vision discontinued. That call remains with me daily as I am challenged to give my best in service.

I had developed an early interest in social work that grew out of my life as a 4H Club girl. As president of the club, I learned really to care about other people and I had a desire to help those who were hurting. It became a personal interest that I nurtured and developed, first at Alcorn A&M College, where I earned a bachelor's degree in social studies, then in the classroom, where I taught junior and senior high school students in Marion County, Mississippi.

I became involved in the community and in the lives of my students through social functions, church-related activities, club work, civic work, and even just gathering on the sandbar or at the swimming hole.

I spent ten years as the librarian at Marion Central High School and then three years at the Prentiss Institute Junior College Library. I experienced the upheaval of consolidation of the black schools in Marion County, which included shifting teachers and principals and busing students as far away as the next county.

My greatest challenge was when my husband and I were called to leave our home of 20 years and move into a cottage at the Mississippi Rural Center in Columbia. My family had lived in its own home for generations and I personally disliked renting. When we had to move, I could not take my furniture because the cottage had its own. Some of our belongings were left at Head Start centers, private homes, and local churches and others in our former home with its new owners.

The next year, 1976, my husband died. My daughter was away at college and I was left alone, without sufficient income to meet my financial obligations. I was facing the same struggle as many other middle-aged women: I was a widow and mother too young to receive some benefits, with a child too old to receive others. On top of that, the tax structures



changed to our disadvantage.

I had accepted responsibility as Director of the Mississippi Rural Center. It had been partly destroyed by fire and was in the midst of rebuilding. There were board and staff relationships to adjust to, along with putting together a community development plan, managing federal CETA workers, and handling the day-to-day operation of programs such as child care and meals for the elderly and neighborhood children. With all of that, I was attending the University of Southern Mississippi School of Social Work twice a week.

My best hours were those spent going to and from class. Being in the car alone gave me time to pray and seek directions for my life and work. It was during this time that I decided to complete work towards becoming a deaconess. It has turned out to be rewarding beyond my greatest expectations. I earned my master's degree in social work and faced the other challenges before me.

My true call was to work with women in rural development. My project began with 13 women and \$800 from the Women's Division during the first year. The second year we grew to 26 families and the third we reached 78 families, including men and children.

By this time, the Mississippi Annual Conference was very concerned with world hunger and a task force was sent to Senegal, West Africa, to begin a project of wells and water lanes from the Gambia River. I was asked to join that team since both of the projects were initially financed with Women in Rural Development money from the Women's Division.

In 1981 I was privileged to attend DIAKONIA of the Americas in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. This experience broadened my understanding of the ecumenical and sisterly relationship throughout the Americas.

Back in Mississippi, our rural "Operation Garden" had progressed to 126 families, then 150, and eventually to more than 1,000 individuals. We had floods, droughts, abundant crops, and celebrations. We were asked to share information about our program and were given opportunities to grow in ways that I would never have imagined. We did workcamps for United Methodist Youth Fellowship groups across the Southeast. Our proposals were funded and we received tree and seed showers from United Methodist Women's units.

Articles were written about us in local Mississippi newspapers, *Response* magazine, children's literature, and the United Methodist Women's Program Book.

Since becoming a deaconess, I have been personally enriched through travel with the delegation of deaconesses and home missionaries to the Fourteenth International Assembly of DIAKONIA in the United Kingdom. I have had the joy of seeing the lives of elderly persons renewed as they worked and harvested their own food after being encouraged through the garden project.

My experiences with the sisterhood of deaconesses and the added fellowship of home missionaries has been a positive, supportive, caring, and sharing relationship. The Jurisdiction Association invited me at once to become a part of the sisterhood and provided me with financial assistance to travel. The national office kept me informed and supported my efforts for professional and spiritual growth and development by helping make it possible for me to attend regional and international seminars and to take time for personal and spiritual renewal.

The most vital part of my position at the Rural Center was the freedom to assess needs of the neighborhood with board, staff, and community and plan together towards meeting those needs. I encouraged women in their middle years who were looking for second careers to get involved in sharing their skills with persons who need them in an exciting and challenging way.

I feel that young persons on college campuses should be encouraged to serve by the Wesley Foundations and other such groups. The call to service rings forth daily as needs occur. The journey is never ending.



## **Marian Styles-McClintock**

*Deaconess*

Born May 12, 1935, in Spartanburg, South Carolina

Commissioned October 18, 1984

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### **Record of Service**

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|---------|--|
| 1984-85 | Project Director, Metropolitan United Methodist Committee on Relief, Little Rock, Arkansas                                       |
| 1985-87 | Executive Director, YWCA, Paterson, New Jersey   |
| 1987-89 | Associate Council Director, Council on Ministries, Northern New Jersey Conference, Madison, New Jersey                           |
| 1989-   | Executive Secretary, Institutional Ministries, National Program Division, General Board of Global Ministries, New York, New York |

I became a deaconess because I admired the roles and responsibilities of deaconesses in the church as servants of God, and their ability, through the deaconess movement, to go into the world and teach, preach, or do whatever God calls them to do. I was also influenced by the flexibility of the ministry.

Through seminary study, reading, prayer, and meditation, I prepared to become a deaconess. I studied religion at Wesley Theological Seminary, Boston University, Drew University, and St. Paul's School of Theology.

I earned my doctorate from the Union Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio, with a background in social economics, community organization, and education for social change. I received my master's degree in human development and resources from the Merrill-Palmer Institute and Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. My bachelor's degree is from the University of Rhode Island in the area of development of the young child and family relations.

As a deaconess and diaconal minister, I have been able to share my ministry through leadership in spiritual retreats and seminars and through Bible study and prayer groups. I was consecrated as a deaconess in 1984 and became a diaconal minister in 1989.

Currently I serve as an executive secretary with the General Board of Global Ministries in the National Division's office of Institutional Ministries. I relate to national mission agencies as a technical assistant, consultant, and resource person. I network with the directors of the board and staff of the various agencies, providing training for their boards of directors and monitoring their mission programs.

I've served as Associate Council Director with the Northern New Jersey Annual Conference, a Church and Community Worker, executive director of the YWCA, and a consultant and project director of special juvenile justice and crime intervention projects in conjunction with the National Board of the YWCA of the United States.

I'm a past vice-president of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Deaconess and Home Missionary Association and a member of the Northern New Jersey Conference. I was a voting delegate of the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in 1988.

I've had the opportunity to speak in local churches and play an active role in their ministries and on the boards of community agencies. Serving as a retreat leader and holding leadership positions on the district and conference levels of United Methodist Women have been highlights of my service in the church.

My work and services have been recognized and shown appreciation through awards and invitations from mayors, governors, annual conferences, and community organizations. Most recently, I was invited by the mayor of Paterson, New Jersey, to work on the "Paterson 200" celebration in 1992.

Currently I am an apprentice in a spiritual program at Wainwright House in Rye, New York. I will graduate in December 1993. My goal is to develop, direct, and teach spiritual guidance through seminars and programs.



### **Alfredo Suazo**

*Home Missionary*

Born July 28, 1911, in Antonito, Colorado

Appointed August 15, 1958      Retired July 1, 1976

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#### **Record of Service**

1958-67	Laundry and Dairy Worker, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico
1968-76	Boys' Dorm Supervisor, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico

When I was a deputy sheriff in the San Luis Valley, my youngest son, Eddie, decided to go to McCurdy School in Española, New Mexico. My wife, Beatrice, was accepted as a cook at McCurdy and joined Eddie and our other children.

I, too, applied for a job and began work in the school's laundry, orchards, and dairy. My most difficult job was being a dormitory parent for 30 to 50 boys. However, my most rewarding times came when I saw some of the boys I had difficulty with graduate from high school and go on to college or to jobs.

Since retirement, my wife and I attend some of the Homecomings at McCurdy. I have a very proud feeling when the young men come to me and thank me for what I did as a dormitory parent for eight years.

I still use my talent as a musician to play the piano for church, to sing specials, and to entertain the people at the Long-Term Care Center at La Jara Hospital. The people enjoy my music and it makes me happy that I can still play and sing.



## **Beatrice Suazo**

*Home Missionary*

Born September 18, 1913, in Las Mesitas, Colorado

Appointed August 15, 1958      Retired July 1, 1976

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### **Record of Service**

1958-59	Cook, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico
1959-61	Homemaker
1961-68	Assistant Matron, Girls' Dorm, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico
1968-76	Assistant Dorm Parent, Boys' Dorm, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico

I was born in Las Mesitas, Colorado, into a family where my father was Roman Catholic and my mother Presbyterian. We were brought up in the Roman Catholic Church. When my oldest brother began to attend Menaul School in Albuquerque, we all began attending the Presbyterian Church.

I married Alfredo Suazo. When our children were old enough to go to high school, they were influenced by my brother-in-law, José M. Martinez, a teacher at McCurdy, to go there to school. One of our daughters and all three of our sons graduated from McCurdy School in Española, New Mexico. When our youngest son, Eddie, chose to go to McCurdy, I decided to apply for work there. It was like an instant call to serve. I had worked at housekeeping since I graduated from high school, and had done some work at summer resorts. There was an opening at McCurdy for two cooks, and Emma Valdez and I applied. Both of us were accepted. I enjoyed cooking and had a desire to help McCurdy School, as well as the boys and girls. I felt with God's help and guidance I could be a good cook.

Highlights of my work at McCurdy included helping people as I could at different assigned jobs other than cooking. I substituted as an aide at the health clinic, worked in Home Economics classes, and helped my husband Alfredo as dorm parent in the boys' dormitory where we had responsibility for 30 to 50 boys.

I can say my 20 years of service were happy and rewarding years. I worked hard and received the love and friendship of the staff.

Since retirement my husband, Alfredo, and I live in Antonito, Colorado, where I am active in the Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Women, and as a volunteer at the senior citizens' program.

Today, Corine, our only child who did not graduate from McCurdy, is teaching fourth grade at McCurdy and is enjoying the experience.



## **Van Minh H. Tran**

*Deaconess*

Born January 12, 1928, in Can Tho, Vietnam

Commissioned October 19, 1978

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### **Record of Service**

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|---------|--|
| 1978-89 | Director, Indochinese Ecumenical Community Center, Oakland, California     |
| 1989-92 | Counselor, Asian Americans for Community Involvement, San Jose, California |
| 1992-   | Case Manager, Rehabilitation Mental Health Services, San Jose, California  |

My parents were role models for me. My father was a minister. In addition to that, when I was about 17 years old I had a clerk-typist job at the office of the president of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Saigon for two years. Through this job I contacted American missionaries daily and wished that I could have an opportunity to become a missionary. Consequently, when I learned about the work of United Methodist deaconesses, it did not take me long to decide to apply to become a deaconess. I was commissioned in 1978.

I love people, particularly those who are less fortunate than I, and I am willing to share what I have with them to support them in every way possible. These are hallmarks of my personality and upbringing. I grew up in the church and was always taught to care for others. Besides, I am always interested in learning how to help people more effectively.

When I decided to join the United Methodist deaconesses, I went back to graduate school for formal training. I earned a master's degree in counseling from the State University of San Francisco in San Francisco, California.

Currently I am a deaconess on special appointment. At the beginning, my office was housed in a United Methodist Church in Oakland, California. My project was ecumenically funded and served refugees of all nations. During the first 11 years I provided resettlement services, counseling, and guidance for newly arrived refugees. I served approximately 1,500 refugees a year, assisting them with emotional and family problems and helping them find employment.

Indochinese men and women experienced a change of roles when they arrived in this country. That change had a great effect on their mental health and, in most cases, caused a breakup of families. They also had to adapt to new values such as human rights, women's rights, and children's rights. These things were not heard of in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Once in the United States, Indochinese women and children seemed to enjoy their new rights and freedoms and they adopted them much too quickly. Their husbands and fathers did not have enough time to adjust. These changes created family conflicts.

For the first 10 years I had to spend 60 percent of my working time doing fundraising and other administrative duties. I worked twelve hours a day six days a week. Finally I was so

exhausted and overwhelmed that I had to change my job.

In March 1989, I began to work at an Asian American outpatient mental health clinic and served only Vietnamese refugees or immigrants who had difficulties in adjusting to their new lives. Then I felt more relaxed and pleased because I could use my skills appropriately. These refugees were very homesick. They were also frightened because they had to cope with an unfamiliar culture and lifestyle. I reassured them by sharing with them the experiences I had acquired as I had followed that path myself.

In 1990 I was called to serve Amerasians—children conceived by American GIs and Vietnamese women. Most of these young people were orphans who had grown up in the streets and had limited education. My heart went out to them. I tried my best to provide them a family atmosphere.

Currently I am serving English-speaking clients who are involved in drug and alcohol abuse and who have criminal records. I have a caseload of 20 persons (13 Caucasians, 5 Vietnamese, and 2 Mexicans). Most of them were victims of our social ills: they were homeless, lonely, and hopeless. My duties are to help them obtain psychiatric care, to secure stable financial assistance (either from city, state, or federal sources), and to assist them with housing services. Our clients make significant progress, and only a very few of them return to hospitals, jails, or out on the streets as homeless. Through this position I have learned a lot about American society. I am very grateful I have the skills to serve the most needy persons of our society.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, I have a new project that serves Vietnamese at the Twin Towers UMC in Alameda. There are fifteen Vietnamese, eleven of whom are new Christians. All of them came here from Vietnam only in the past year. The minister of this church, the Reverend Robert Keller, and many members of the congregation are strongly supportive of this project. The church is in an ideal location to provide spiritual assistance to Vietnamese. I feel very lucky to have two vital colleagues, deaconesses Eleanor Knudsen and Dorothy Kimbrell, who always assist and support me. I feel like a tree that grows beside a stream.

I can enjoy the outcome of my hard work now. Most of my clients have become good contributing citizens. They have stable jobs, have obtained higher education, and own their own homes. Seven families (38 members) have accepted Jesus Christ and have been baptized in the Methodist and Presbyterian churches. They attend Sunday school and Sunday worship services regularly.

I joined The United Methodist Church when I was 38 years old. I had grown up and was very active in a fundamentalist church. As I adjusted to Methodism and my new faith, there were some anxious times and some times when I was a bit bewildered by it all. Those experiences turned out to be the very things that later helped me to understand and empathize with my clients.

I always try to meet my clients' material needs first and their spiritual needs later. Looking back on my 12 years of service, I have no doubt that God has called me to carry out this commission.



**Emma Valdez**

*Home Missionary*

Born November 20, 1907, in Las Mesitas, Colorado

Appointed July 23, 1956      Retired June 1, 1970

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**Record of Service**

1956-70      Cook, McCurdy School, Española, New Mexico

I was left alone after my mother's death. In 1956 I was appointed as a home missionary to serve as a cook, preparing three meals a day for boarder students at McCurdy Mission. I stayed there for 14 years and enjoyed all the time I was there.

I didn't have a college education but my mother was a good cook and had taught me well. I worked at the Conejas Restaurant for two summers and then the Rainbow Trout Lodge for two more summers before I was appointed as a home missionary at McCurdy School in 1956.

I didn't have any difficulties. One of the highlights of my life as a home missionary was living among Christian people. The work was hard but I didn't mind. I retired in 1970.



**Robert C. Walker**

*Home Missionary*

Born February 22, 1949 in Marshall, Texas

Commissioned October 23, 1981

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**Record of Service**

1981-      Director, Wesley Community Center, Dayton, Ohio



I was introduced to many opportunities for mission involvement by Lois Dauway of the General Board of Global Ministries Mission Personnel Office, in the 1970s. Ethnic minority staffpersons in the Board's National Division, namely Louis Hodge and Negail Riley, were also important influences in my becoming a home missionary. I consulted with them along the way.

What I hadn't realized, however, is that I had been preparing myself all along to meet the requirements to become a home missionary. While I was not thinking of becoming a missionary, I was taking all the right courses at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, that would help to qualify me for service. I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Wiley and then a master's degree in church and community work at Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee. I studied crisis counseling and intervention at Spalding College in Louisville, Kentucky, and then took several more courses at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

In 1980 I completed course work at Wright State to meet the requirements of the General Board's Mission Personnel Office, and in October 1981 I was commissioned as a home missionary. I have held the position of director of Wesley Community Center, an urban ministry project, in Dayton, Ohio, since October 1973.

The most difficult situation for me has come from the church in its attempt to deal with my ethnicity. My idea of what the church ought to be was often in disagreement with my experience. The church should be available for *everyone*, but often it is not inclusive. I have not felt a part of the total church's structure, nor of the structure that relates specifically to home missionaries. There seems to be an awkwardness in the attempts to include and involve black Americans in the structure and inner workings of the church.

In reviewing the social changes I've experienced, there is one very close to home: my own attitude and the attitude of the church towards the poor and dispossessed. Another is the change in attitude of our government toward issues affecting the poor and racial minorities, as well as the struggle of women for acceptance, equality, and full personhood. A drastic social change is the increase in illicit drug use and abuse, which has created a need for exceptional risk taking and commitment in those who desire to serve, especially in critical areas. Most unfortunately, it has compounded the issue of poverty and the ability of people to work toward building wholesome communities.

As a home missionary, I have had the opportunity to be involved with people who are committed to working toward understanding God's will for us and for people in the nation's cities. It has been rewarding to revive an inactive ministry in an urban setting, to help develop and train young people for compassionate ministries, and to share with them ways they can share their lives with others in a positive and productive manner.



## **Virginia Maniti Williams**

### *Deaconess*

Born May 14, 1923, in the Philippines

Commissioned 1949 (Philippines Central Conference)

Commissioned GBGM Missionary August 21, 1977

Reinstated as Deaconess, Philippines Central Conference May, 1978

Transferred to U.S. Church April 10, 1981 Retired May 31, 1985

### **Record of Service**

1949-50	Deaconess, Eden Home, San Fernando, Pampanga, Philippines
1950-51	Deaconess, Pulung Masle Guagua, Pampanga, Philippines
1951-53	Clerk, Literature Department, The United Methodist Church, Philippines
1953-55	Study Leave
1955-57	Associate Executive Secretary, Literature Department, The United Methodist Church, Philippines
1957-77	Withdrew from Deaconess Service
1978-80	Officer-in-Charge, Harris Memorial College, Manila, Philippines
1981-85	Home Visitor, Tri-County Headstart, Decatur, Michigan

When I was growing up in the Philippines, my mother impressed upon me that before I was born, she vowed to God that if I were a girl, she would dedicate me to deaconess service. Deaconesses were a very important part of my years growing up. As a family, we took our turn housing deaconesses appointed to our church. I accompanied the deaconesses when they went visiting and conducting weekday religious education lessons in the barrios. Becoming a deaconess was in my future.

When I was in high school, I wanted to be an English teacher or a journalist. One of my cousins, who helped me get my high school education and was himself a well-known journalist, became my role model.

But during the Japanese occupation, my father was imprisoned by the military. When he was released after a long month, he became seriously ill. A pastor who had known my family for many years reminded me of my parents' vows. He said it could be that my father's illness might be God's way of reminding me of the promise my parents had made to the Lord. At that very moment I renewed my commitment and interest in deaconess service.

I wasn't able to go to college during the war years, so I involved myself in church work. We happened to have a very creative pastor at that time and we did a number of things in both the church and the surrounding community. Even under those circumstances, the preparation had begun for me to attend Harris Memorial College in Manila to train as a deaconess.

I went to the college—then called Harris Memorial Training School—in 1946 and

graduated in 1949. Two years later the Woman's Division of Christian Service gave me a scholarship to finish school. I went on to Drew Theological Seminary on a Crusade Scholarship. I was being prepared to do curriculum work upon my return to the Philippines.

One summer I interned in Nashville with the Methodist Publishing House, working with curriculum resources. While there, I worked under the supervision of Mary Edna Lloyd and Mattie Lula Cooper. This experience gave me a good background for my responsibilities as Children's Editor of Sunday School Curriculum for what was then the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches.

My deaconess service in the Philippines began in 1949 at the Eden Home in San Fernando, Pampanga. I was there for a year. Eden was a home away from home for students attending college or high school in San Fernando. I served as something like a dean, planning activities, worship experiences, and menus, and doing whatever was needed to keep the dormitory running smoothly and happily.

Another of my responsibilities was to adapt United States materials for Philippine use.

On weekends I helped with leadership training at local churches, particularly those lacking resources.

The next year I was appointed deaconess in charge of Christian education at Pulung Masle United Methodist Church. From 1951 to 1953 I went to college while working with Doris Hess—a missionary of the Board of Missions—in the literature department of the Methodist Church. On weekends I had a deaconess appointment at my home church, Mexico Methodist Church in Mexico, Pampanga, Philippines. I spent 1953 to 1955 at Drew Theological Seminary.

After my years at Drew I became Associate Executive Secretary of Methodist Literature in the Philippine church (1955-57). My responsibility as Children's Editor of Sunday School Curriculum fulfilled part of the Methodist Church's contribution to the program of the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches, now the National Council of Churches of the Philippines. On weekends I was also assigned as the deaconess of San Simon, Pampanga.

I returned to the United States in 1957 to get married. At that time, the policy of the deaconess board was that a deaconess scheduled to be married had to withdraw from service.

In 1977 my husband and I went to the Philippines, at the request of Harris Memorial College, to be on staff there. At the same time I was reinstated to the Philippine Deaconess Board. At the end of the second semester, at the retirement of Dr. Prudencia Fabro, I was elected Officer in Charge of the college while the President-Elect, Zenaida Lumba, was finishing her Ph.D. at Indiana University.

While I was Officer in Charge at Harris, it became critical that we review the tax status of the college. This was one of the more difficult situations I have had to deal with. Property appraisal had gone up three times over and the taxes alone almost equalled our entire yearly budget. I had to vote with the Board of Trustees to move Harris from its downtown site, which was prime property at that time, to another site where the taxes would not overwhelm the college. It was a very unpopular decision and I had to interpret the decision to the church, the alumnae, and the faculty.

My missionary term ended in 1980 and we returned to the United States, where I transferred my membership to the U.S. deaconess relationship. Professionally, I worked with the Tri-County Headstart in Michigan as a home visitor and preschool teacher until my second retirement from that position in 1988.

That same year I became a volunteer deaconess at Rosewood United Methodist Church in Los Angeles. My main responsibility there was to minister to the senior citizens of the church, of which there were many.

Currently I serve as a part-time deaconess at St. Paul United Methodist Church. I've been employed by the district to be the Filipino outreach person in the tri-city area of Fre-

mont, Newark, and Union City, California.

My service was long and rewarding. As a Headstart worker, I saw many children whose development was at risk. Many had single teenaged parents. My satisfaction was to see positive growth changes in those parents that benefitted their children.

My present ministry is God's very special gift to me. After 32 years of serving with my husband in black congregations, I am now serving my own people—Filipinos—therefore I feel more complete.

Among us Filipinos there is a tendency to defer to Anglos, to please them, to feel that anything American is better. Sometimes in strong terms and sometimes subtly, I'm trying to help us feel proud of who we are, value our heritage, and not buy into the myth that everything "stateside is better." Slowly, but surely, I am able to network with other Filipino groups and agencies that can help us to contribute our own spiritual heritage to the life of the church.



### **Marian Brincefield Wooten**

*Deaconess*

Born June 22, 1907, in Reidsville, North Carolina

Commissioned November 10, 1963      Retired December 21, 1973

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#### **Record of Service**

1928-1973      Executive Director, Bethlehem Community Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

I attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and graduated with a major in Sociology and Education.

My introduction to community work began with my field placement at Bethlehem Center in Nashville, Tennessee. I worked under the supervision of Miss Margaret Young and Miss Annie Rogers, who were deaconesses.

I was asked to take over the job of director of Bethlehem Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in 1928, by Mrs. C. C. Weaver, then president of the Woman's Missionary Society of the Western North Carolina Conference. I was not commissioned as a deaconess until 1963. In order to be a deaconess, I would have had to take training at Scarritt College. In the 1920s, Tennessee state laws prevented blacks from attending Scarritt College. I worked for many years before I finally became a "legal" deaconess. I had all the rights and privileges of a deaconess in those early years, before I was finally able to go to Scarritt College in 1955-1956. I was commissioned in 1963.

As I worked, I took advantage of every opportunity for further study. I had special training in kindergarten work at Columbia University in New York City. I also took extension classes in education and supervision at North Carolina University in Chapel Hill.

My job at Bethlehem Center, where I served from September 1928 to December 1973, was the major part of my life's work. It was my only job. My responsibility was to revive the Bethlehem Center project, which had been tried for a year before I came. With much visiting and advertisement, we restarted in the basement of Reynolds Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church with 25 preschoolers and 16 crib babies. Our progress was such that in two years we needed more space. With \$14,000 raised by the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church S., a new building was erected on Hickory Street in 1930.

Through the years, staff and money were constant needs. I repeatedly lost, to other projects in the city, staff that I had developed and trained. I could not pay enough to attract and hold good, qualified staffpersons. Still, Bethlehem House, as it was first called, not only survived but introduced many services to the community, including day care, kindergarten, daily vacation Bible school, classes for mothers, and girls' and boys' clubs. In October 1938 Bethlehem House received a day nursery license from the North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, becoming the only licensed day nursery for black children in the entire state. The Center was responsible for many "firsts" in the city: classes in nutrition, home beautification, crafts, and writing for the adults, and the first black troop of Girl Scouts. An annual training session for church leaders was also offered, and the first well-baby clinic staffed by doctors and nurses was started at the Center. All of these programs would later be taken over by other agencies.

The 1940s brought World War II, and more women than ever were working and needing child care. The need to expand the Center was again obvious. The Women of Western North Carolina Conference gave \$30,000 toward an expansion of the Hickory Street property, which was planned for 1947. However, when we approached the city planning board about expansion, we learned that the Hickory Street property was doomed, as it would fall in the pathway of the proposed North-South Expressway, so expansion of this property would be futile.

While waiting for promised space in the urban renewal project, the Center moved its operation to the Community Building of the Happy Hill Gardens Housing Project. The Center had been offering half-day programs at Happy Hill and Cleveland Avenue Homes prior to this time, so the Housing Authority was well aware of the fine work that was done.

After a long wait, in December of 1965 Bethlehem Center moved into the beautiful new center at the corner of 5th Street and Cleveland Avenue. With our staff and 80 children, we moved into a dream come true.

In 1968, a federally funded program, the Concentrated Employment Program (CEP), began to retrain people for better jobs. There was a need for quality day care while mothers trained. Bethlehem Center set up a program in the old Hanes Knitting Mill building on Main Street with a capacity for 90 children. The Winston-Salem Housing Authority was so impressed by this service that they asked the Center's Board to plan buildings and provide staff for day care centers for the housing projects at Kimberly Park and Happy Hill Gardens. This was in 1971 and Bethlehem Center had become a big business with three centers to operate and a budget of both private and public money.

In 1975, Bethlehem Center suffered a severe financial crisis. Church funding had dropped. Many felt that this was due to the change in giving resulting from the transfer of project administration to the National Division from the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Board of Missions in 1964. The church women no longer felt as committed to giving personal contributions as they once had, since all funding now came from a general fund. However, publicity of the plight brought renewed contributions. Needed employees and funding also came from the Department of Human Services. The Northwest Child Development Corporation purchased child care slots for children under its jurisdiction and the Department of Social Services was able to increase its payment for the children it placed at the Center.

Many of our children from Bethlehem Center have grown up to become leaders in the community. They have distinguished themselves in a variety of vocational fields—medicine, education, and law, among others. We have received innumerable letters and notes of appreciation from parents, and as I've gone around the community speaking to various groups, I've taken the opportunity to thank them for their support through the years.

Sixty-five years have brought many changes. The cost of care per child has gone from \$5 per month to \$200. The Board is now made up of men and women, black and white, church and community leaders of all denominations, and the Center's services are offered to all children, regardless of race or creed, who are in need of child care. But one thing has remained constant through these years: the commitment to quality child development.

In the reception room of the Center, there is a painting depicting Jesus with a small child, brown of skin and dark of eye, in his arms. Never more truly was expressed the words of the greatest Teacher of all times, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

By God's grace and in His strength, I continue to strive in the service of not just the little children, but all of His children.

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